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Youth and Christianity



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# Youth and Christianity

Lectures

BY

O. KLYKKEN

Translated from the Norwegian by  
LAURITZ LARSEN



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## FOREWORD.

I have had occasion to look through the manuscript for Mr. Klykken's book, and I am glad to accompany it with a few words.

Just as the writer is favorably known by his former books, so also a strong impression of his ability to set forth his thoughts in a pleasing manner will be found here. There is a combination of depth and fervor with a charming and clear style that is not often found. And the contents are altogether timely and practical, and characterized by deep, Christian sincerity.

I hope the book may find many readers, and I am convinced that any one who makes its acquaintance will derive rich blessings from it. It is written especially for young people, and it is cordially recommended for distribution among them. But older people, as well, will derive great benefit from the reading of it.

Throndhjem, November, 1907.

S. E. JØRGENSEN, Pastor.

These lectures, as well as those published a few years ago—“Our Homes and Our Children”—were delivered at the school “Fredly,” in Strinden, Norway, a school belonging to the Throndhjem circuit of the Home Mission Society. The reception accorded the first series has encouraged the publication of these.

O. K.

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## I.

# Spring and Youth—and a Little Layman's Philosophy.

(In lieu of introduction.)

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## 1. Behold the Fowls of the Air, Consider the Lilies of the Field!

"Grand is Spring in Norway's fertile valleys,  
    Grandly conquers here its power mild.  
Earth awakens from its sleep and rallies;  
    Field and meadow bloom with flowers wild.  
Loosed streams toward ocean gaily dancing,  
    Waterfalls sing grandly in their might,  
Sprouting life in bounds advancing  
    Spreads o'er nature verdant magic bright."

—M. J. Monrad.

Behold the beauty of spring! Vapor rises from the earth at sunrise. After the warm May shower, all verdure of field and meadow, in forest and glen, is greener than ever. It seems almost as though the beautiful color would drip from the sun-kissed blade and leaf. Here and there the blossoms of spring peep forth, white, yellow, red, blue, violet, in all shades. In a few days you will see the whole earth covered with the most wonderful spread of flowers.

And do you hear the delightful music? From the humming insects to the master singer among the birds of the forest and the bird of passage, whatever has the power of sound, all, even the lamb, the kid, and the calf, join their voices in the grand concert, while the waterfall sings bass.

Everywhere fragrance and color, beauty and life, song and sound; and everything that creeps, skips, runs, flutters, or flies, seems filled with joy and hope.

Dear youth, do but open your eye and ear to the beauty of spring! We older folk most heartily wish you your spring joy. Yes, we do not only wish that you may have joy, but we would gladly help you to lay real good hold on it, that it may grow and endure until hoary old age. And in this we believe we have the approval of Him who said: "Behold the fowls of the air . . . consider the lilies of the field!"

But He who spoke these words also said: "Are ye not much better than they?" That we must never forget. *We are human beings.*

You may certainly enjoy the spring with its teeming life and all its beauty; sing forth your joy; skip and run, if you wish; but not only with the joy of the lamb and the kitten, or the lark and the thrush. Are ye not much better than they? Most assuredly, infinitely better. And you should enjoy yourself so much better; so much higher, nobler, and richer should your joy be.

The cow enjoys the green meadow, with or without flowers, as far as we know, only because she can satisfy her hunger. But you and I do not feel joy only at the thought of the food value of the meadow; we are directly affected by the beautiful colors and graceful forms, and the impression of beauty tunes our hearts to joy—a higher and more spiritual joy than that of the cow, not so?

But higher!

We feel that the fair forms, the odors and colors of the flowers, and the quality in us that we are pleasantly affected by them and that we receive this impression as one of beauty, that this is not a matter of chance, but that there is a thought back of it all, a good and loving thought, God's thought,—and we feel God back of creation, His work.

It does not disturb us, if some of the learned naturalists say: "We have investigated earth and plants, animals and men, air and sea, but have nowhere found a Creator, everywhere matter and natural laws only, nothing else."

We might reply: "We are not at all surprised, for we did not expect that microscope, chemical analysis, or the dissecting knife alone would be able to show us God, the Creator. But still less are they able to show that He does not exist."

It might also be natural for us to answer with a question: How did these natural laws and the mat-

ter upon which they work come into existence? Has everything, as some would have it, developed from one primitive cell? Whence, then, this primitive cell, with its wonderful power of development? And does not development presuppose a beginning? Has it made itself? Come into existence by chance? Would not that be a wonder of greater magnitude than the wonder of creation?

The world runs as a great clock, they say, and does not need, nor even have any room for God.

Indeed? A clock! Very well. But who ever entertained the absurd idea that a clock could have made itself? Whether it be a pocket watch or a steeple clock, whether it runs for two weeks or a year, every one knows that there is a watchmaker back of it. And the more exactly it runs, the greater master must he be who made it.

Considered as a clock, the world must certainly be said to be a mechanical masterpiece without equal. If we think of everything that moves here, for instance, the millions of orbs that course through space with immense speed without ever colliding or leaving their orbits, so far as we know; the circulation of the blood in our own bodies; the movement of the sap in every blade and leaf, every flower and fruit, where every kind of matter is able to find a way of its own, one flower becoming red and another white, although the white and the red clover draw their nourishment

from the same soil and enjoy the same dew and the same sun; lingonberries become sour and strawberries sweet, although they grow on the same hillside; and even such "small irregularities" do not happen as, for instance, that birch bark grows on a pine tree or pine needles on a birch, rosebuds on a myrtle, or myrtle leaves on a rosebush. When we consider all this, do we not receive an overwhelming impression of His greatness and power who has builded this clock and succeeded in making it run so regularly century after century for thousands of years?

Let all the wise men of the world try to find a better explanation of all these problems than the plain words of the Bible concerning God's almighty "Let there be!" (Gen. 1), and, "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power!" (Hebr. 1, 3).

At all events, they have not succeeded unto this day.

If you hear delightful music from an adjoining room, you will, no doubt, enjoy its beauty even though you know nothing about the musician — just as so many enjoy the beauty of nature without knowing God, who has produced it. But if the doors are thrown open, disclosing to you that the musician is your dearest friend, will not the music become dearer to you and seem doubly beautiful?

Just so in this case. The more clearly you realize that it is God, your own dear heavenly Father, who

has brought forth all things and upholds all things, the higher and richer will be your enjoyment of the beauties of spring and all nature.

And at the same time, the more carefully you study the mighty works of God in nature, and the stronger your impression becomes of God's infinite power and wealth, as revealed in nature, the more confidently will you place yourself in His hand, being certain that all the power and all the means that are at His disposal will be used in the service of fatherhood to the benefit of you, His child.

God grant that these thoughts may help you, dear young friends — and the rest of us, too — to lay real firm hold of the joy of spring! Then it will also grow and endure till hoary old age.

Youth is the springtime of life.

"Fair is Spring in hearts of youth each morrow.

Roses bloom on healthy cheeks so pure!

Fair is Joy, and fair each noble Sorrow,

Love with beauty-tints doth so conjure.

Life within doth strongly throb, streaming

Forth in cheerful song and mighty deed,—

But in song most oft, for song was given

To voice what hearts of youth do need."

—M. J. Monrad.

Healthy and unsullied youth feels that it is related to spring, related to the teeming life that sprouts and grows, to the smiling blossom and the singing bird,

to everything that swells with joy, hope, and expectation. Like the lily is the clean, chaste heart, like the lily of the valley the pleasing modesty of youth, like the song of the lark the courageous hope with a thousand glad expectations; while health and vitality course through every artery and every nerve, as the sap of spring in every stalk and stem, bush and blade. Oh, the joy of life then!

Yes, beautiful is spring in the valleys of our country; but we would say: More beautiful is spring in the heart of youth.

Everything that becomes green and grows is beautiful, every sprout, every blade that bursts forth with the power of life and grows ever taller, if it but receives moisture and sunshine. But more beautiful is that which grows in the heart of youth, kept clean and pure. Budding thoughts are loosed from bondage, thoughts about yourself, about your life, its origin, its plan, and its goal, as well as thoughts about everything between heaven and earth,—a vast and motley number. But there is unity in them: every thought tends higher, ever upward to greater clearness and a broader view. And this growth succeeds little by little, if He who is the Light of the World, the Sun of Righteousness, is the light on your way.

Beautiful is the flower in the garden, in the parlor, in the field, and in the woods, from the valley to

the top of the mountain. But more beautiful is the rose on the cheek of uncorrupted youth, and more beautiful are noble feelings in pure young hearts: the feeling of joy at whatsoever is true and beautiful and pure and good. But most beautiful of all are the roses of love: the love of father and mother and sister and brother; the love of faithful friendship, with its sincere sympathy and its joy at being able to be of assistance, consolation, or pleasure to others; and, let us not forget, love for the chosen one, when that time comes; and finally, the queen of all roses, the love of God, poured into our hearts through faith in God's love for us as revealed in Jesus Christ. And together with this always grow the joy and peace of knowing oneself encompassed by the love of God, the joy in the Lord which gives strength, and the peace which keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our God.

Beautiful is the concert of spring from the thousand throats with the accompaniment of brook and billow, the falls, and the murmur of pines—all blending in beautiful harmony, though every bird sings his own melody. But more beautiful still is the song of happy youth at work, on festive occasions, and in church.

And “song was given to voice what hearts of youth do need.” And how much there is to sing about: the joy of life, of home, of friendship, of

spring, and of all nature — our yearnings and our hopes, our love, all will break forth in song. And still more our religious feelings, our prayers and confessions, our faith, our peace, will find expression in song.

Behold, such is the breaking forth of spring in the life of youth as it will be if God rules. What a wealth of beauty and joy! And all this is yours, if you but accept, hold fast, and do not waste what God would give you.

And now we say with the Preacher of the old covenant: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth" (Eccl. 11, 9). Yes, rejoice! But do not forget that you are a human being, do not forget the high value and aim of your life, do not forget your responsibility. Here, too, it holds good that we do not only wish you joy, all wholesome and true joy of youth, but we are keenly desirous of helping you that it may grow and endure even unto the days of old age. For this, however, two things are especially required: we must all remember, as before stated, that we are human beings, or, in other words, we must learn to know ourselves; and, furthermore, we must learn to know God as He would be known of us.

## 2. Are Ye Not Much Better Than They?

Thus spoke our Savior,—are ye not much better than flower or bird? An explicit exhortation to consider what we are and to try to make that clear to ourselves. Well, what is a human being? What are we?

*We are the offspring of God,* some of the chief poets of the heathens have said. (Acts 17, 28.)

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him,” we read on the first page of the Bible (Gen. 1, 27).

“Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He (our Lord Jesus Christ) shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” Thus did the apostle John testify (1 John 3, 2), after he had received that Spirit of which our Savior had said: “He will guide you into all truth, . . . receive of mine, and shall show it unto you (John 16, 13. 14).

What shall we say to this?

If we are true to ourselves and let “the weeping child which is found in the innermost recesses of every person’s heart” find utterance, we receive this answer: The testimony quoted to show that I am from God and that I am permitted to come unto Him, sounds just like a song of my native land, that alone can satisfy my need and my tears.

We all feel the truth of the words of the church father Augustine: "Our soul is restless and has no peace, until it rests in God." If we were, as some say, only matter, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, etc., whence this desire to seek and find God, a desire which is common to every human being? And, furthermore, if there be no God, as some say, then why this desire, which is so deeply rooted in the nature of man? It would then be an absurdity without a parallel in all existence.

Every living thing needs air and water, and there is enough air and water for plants, animals, and men. Because the plant needs sunshine, it reaches upward to draw life from the light and heat of the sun, and behold, the sunbeam comes to meet it. If there were no sun, the plant would, if it existed, have been formed so that it needed no sunshine.

And still man, the glory of creation, should have this absorbing want, the need of communion with God, a thirst for Him, a thirst that can not be satisfied by all the wealth and glories of the world, not by anything except Him, and still no God? Impossible! If there were no God, and man did not proceed from Him, man would not have this need and yearning for God, this thirst after God. "He weeps not for gold who never saw gold."

The energetic strife against God, in which so many engage, is an unconscious acknowledgment of

His existence. For sincere men do not as a rule rise to combat against something that does not exist.

Verily, God does exist. All nature, from the mighty luminous orbs to the most insignificant creeping thing and the smallest blade of grass, testifies of Him. The Holy Scriptures testify of Him, and a voice deep within us says yea and amen to this testimony. Thank God, He is, He lives! "And of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things" (Rom. 11, 36).

And we are His handiwork not only in the sense that the flowers and the birds are, but we are created *in the image of God*, that we may by continued development be made more and more like Him, who is wise and good, holy and glorious—proceed from light to light, from serenity to serenity—in order thereafter to be received into glory, to see Him as He is, to dwell with Him in all eternity, and to share everything with Him.

"Our souls were wrought by Thee, our Father,  
 In Thee to rise to fate sublime,  
 That they might from Thy mercies gather  
 The strength to live in likeness Thine.  
 Who can the honor fully know  
 That God doth here on us bestow?  
 Nobility, indeed, it is  
 As that of angels in eternal bliss."

Yes, indeed, a unique nobility!

If no fall had intervened, the development might

have continued unhindered, with an even increase in the knowledge of God and His good and holy will, increase in love, in desire and ability to do the will of God, and increase in joy at being permitted to be the blessed servant of the divine Majesty.

But now we all feel that something that is not from God has entered into our nature, a fall has taken place, the image of God has been demolished, self-love has taken its place. Therefore a natural development of human nature, as it is now, does not lead to God, but away from God, because self-love deposes God from the reign of the human heart and life, which by right belong to Him, and places the dear Self on the throne, as experience clearly shows among all peoples in all lands.

The fundamental evil is that self-love has thus replaced the love of God and His will. And from this the evil spreads throughout the entire spiritual life, because, when self-love has gained supremacy, it acts like blood poison upon the entire inner man, upon knowledge, feeling, and will. Self-love destroys both vision and judgment, corrupts the will, and deprives a person of joy, the highest and only true and lasting joy, the joy in God.

No, a natural development on the basis of self-love would surely not lead back to God, no matter how hard mankind would try to place this line of development on a high level and choose high and

noble ideals, etc. No one can lift himself up by the hair. The one thing needful here was not a new program arranged by the wisest and best of men, but the first essential was that the fundamental evil be amended, i. e., that the reign of self-love be overthrown, and the love of God become the main-spring in life, the image of God be restored in the fallen generation.

But it is also readily understood that mankind itself did not possess the power to bring about such a fundamental change. And thus there is no possibility, after the fall, of amending the evil, unless God Himself would take hold anew.

And He has taken hold, He has put something new into the world.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3, 16).

He gave His Son to the generation that had corrupted its path and in self-love had turned away from God, from life to death. Thus did God bring something new into the world: *He gave His Son.*

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1, 12). As many as received the Christ of the Bible as the Savior, as their Savior, and gave themselves to Him in faith, experienced this wonderful thing: the reign of self-love was overthrown and the love of God

became the motive power of life, became their new nature, i. e., the image of God was restored in them. And on this basis, if God is permitted to rule and reign, that development will take place which leads nearer and nearer to God, with increase in the knowledge of God and His will, and increase in the love of God and the ability to subdue self-love and to do the will of God, and increase in faith and hope; in joy and peace.

And at the same time there is increase in the knowledge of self. For the nearer we approach Him, who is the perfect light, the more clearly are we enabled to see ourselves as we are, and the better do we understand what deep marks have been left by the fall.

Whoever has received Christ in faith, has received healing for his fatal illness. "With His stripes we are healed" (Is. 53). But we are only convalescing, our healing must increase. Self-love no longer has dominion over an honest disciple of Christ; it is subdued; but still it remains as an evil and tempting power within him. Self-love would lead him to disobedience, impatience, ingratitude, grumbling, and stubbornness toward God, and to enmity, irritability, anger, hate, and unkind deeds toward men. Self-love will infect even his best qualities and lead him to secret conceit and self-exaltation or even to do his good works that he may have glory of men.

It always grieves a disciple of Jesus to discover such feelings in himself, for there is nothing that he would rather do than to keep himself pure and free from sin. Sometimes he may become so confused that he does not know which way to turn, and complains: It seems to me that matters are gradually growing worse with me. Then we reply: The sins, the soiled and unclean things, were there before, too; but you are just beginning to discover them, because you have begun to walk with Him, who is the true Light which enlightens every person, and the longer you live with Him and the nearer you come to our Lord Jesus Christ, the more evil you will discover in yourself.

The fact that the school of experience during our walk with Jesus teaches us to know ourselves better and better, our weak points, and the dangers that threaten us from our old nature, is a growth that bears its fruit. It preserves and increases our humility, it encourages us to watch and pray, it urges us diligently to approach God and ever to seek a closer and more intimate union with Him, the fountain of our life and power, our joy and peace. And then that for which we pray in one of our church hymns comes to pass: He helps us that "the joy of faith may ever grow, with sin and sorrow far below."

## II.

### The Young Christian Life.

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#### 1. The First Germ of Life—Baptism.

We all know it to be a fact that wherever there is life there is development and growth. Consider the waving fields of grain in the fall. What were they four to five months earlier? Only black loam everywhere. And when the seed was put into the ground, any one who knew no better would think that here nothing could be expected, because everything looked so black.

But behold, while the seed lay there in the ground, a development took place, though it was hid from view. The grain began to grow, i. e., the germ of life which it contained, burst forth, grew larger and larger, straightened up, and one fair day became visible above the ground. We called it a sprout and rejoiced at the sight.

Just so it is with every one that is born of God, I believe we may be permitted to say, when we think of the regeneration of little children in baptism.

Furthermore: The sprout grew to be a stalk, the

stalk headed out, and we rejoiced at the sight of the green stalk with the first signs of an ear, but we did not expect ripe grain to grow in the ear at once. We hoped that in due season it would come, and behold, it came as we had hoped. And at harvest time there is a heavy stand, each stalk bowed by the weight of the ear full of ripe grain, provided the good seed has not been choked by weeds or destroyed by frost or drought, and provided the blessing from on high, with rain and sunshine from heaven, has rested upon it.

Again I say: Just so is it with him who is born of God.

Just as the farmer who has sown the seed expects the sprout, the stalk, the green ear, and the yellow ear with ripe grain—not the last first and not all at the same time, but everything in order and in due season—waits and hopes, confidently and patiently,—so ought we older folk to do, and so do we over against children and young people, if we have true Christian understanding.

Father and mother saw only water and heard only words pronounced by a human voice when they brought their little ones to baptism. And every one that knew no better would consider baptism only an empty form, because even the most acute human reason could not understand that a saving work took place in the soul of the child during the hour of bap-

tism. And entirely too many have rejected infant baptism for this very reason.

But, because we remembered the words of our Savior, saying that the little children should be brought unto Him (Mark 10, 13), and that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3, 5), we brought the little ones to baptism in spite of all objections. And we were confident that the eternal, divine germ of life was deposited in their unconscious spiritual life, as the seed in the receptive soil.

But when we say that life is thus imparted from God in baptism, similarly to what happens when the seed is put into the ground, we have emphasized only one side of the glory of baptism.

In this connection we would also call attention to the following expressions in the ritual of our church, which we believe to be fully warranted by the word of God,—at baptism: ". . . that the child may abide in Christ, even as it has now, through baptism, been grafted into Him," and at confirmation: "May the triune God, who has adopted thee as His child in holy baptism . . ."

When, for instance, a gardener grafts into a vine a branch which does not originally belong to it, there arises a union of life between the vine and the engrafted branch, the sap of the stem flows into the graft, so that it lives, grows, and bears fruit.

And so it is with our children, when they are baptized into Christ.

It sometimes happens that wealthy and childless people adopt a poor orphan and receive the strange child as their own. Were the child picked up by the wayside, were it of low birth, were it born in sin and shame, not one of these things would be allowed to debase it. By its adoption it is raised from its former misery, it is loosed from its relation to its low kin, it bears the family name of its new parents, and receives all the advantages and privileges that it would have had if it had been born as the child of the wealthy parents. If they are as they ought to be, and fulfill the duties they have assumed, to be as a true father and mother to the child, the latter will feel itself surrounded by their father- and mother-love, feel that it has a good home, receive food, clothes, care, bringing-up, schooling, etc. And finally it receives the inheritance.

Thus it is with our little ones when they have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Hence, in order to get as many-sided a conception as possible of the glory of baptism, we shall place these three comparisons side by side:

1. As a good and rich father adopts a poor child, so God the Father in baptism adopts our little ones as His children.

2. As the gardener grafts the weak branch into a vigorous stem, so our little ones are in baptism grafted into Christ and receive life from Him.

3. And as the farmer puts the seed into the ground in the spring, that it may in due season sprout and grow and bear fruit, so the eternal and divine germ of life is in baptism implanted in the unconscious spiritual life of our little children.

After this comes the period of development. And we could, indeed, not wish for anything better than an uninterrupted development. But how often does that happen?

Occasionally we meet believing Christians who profess: I am not aware that the life-giving relation between me and God, which was established by baptism, has ever been broken. And it certainly is beautiful, when the whole life, from cradle to grave, is a life with God without the bitter memories which a fall always brings with it, and without that injury to the soul which invariably results from a life without God.

If we ask ourselves: Was I true to my baptismal covenant during the age of transition? I am sure that many of us must reply: No, I am sorry to say that I fell away, I was for a time a stranger to the life in God. Others may answer: I do not know. It is certainly an unusual thing to meet any one who can say that he knows that he has always lived in

fellowship with God. That some may be the children of God, have forgiveness of sins and the advantages of adoption, even though they dare not, for a time, at least, believe such great things of themselves, is another thing.

In my youth I heard an otherwise well-informed man say that it was impossible to remain true to one's baptismal covenant. There have also been some who have taught that it is impossible for the life which God has implanted in the child by baptism to die. Thus widely may opinions differ. So great may the confusion be in the understanding of this point.

Indeed, that the covenant remains unbroken on the part of God, that with more than a father's love He watches for every erring son and daughter, and that He receives every one that is converted, that "ariseth and goeth to his Father," is an indisputable fact. But to conclude from this that those whose entire lives show that they do not care for God and His will, also possess the life in God, is preposterous. But it is just as preposterous to say that the life can not be preserved, that it is impossible to remain true to the baptismal covenant.

## 2. Are We True to Our Baptismal Covenant?

Well, what is required for that?

Let me at once confess, that I believe that we older Christians very often make the mistake of expecting more than we ought to from children and young people, and that we, as a consequence of this, are too ready to believe that in this or that child all life is extinct. And then it seems to us that everything that has been done for its Christian training has been wasted; the blessings of baptism, the influence of the Christian home, the religious instruction, confirmation — all is wasted!

And the deeper and more serious our own religious life is, the more easily do we make the mistake of expecting or demanding more than we ought to and of looking too darkly on the life of child and young people, and that we, as a consequence of this, which is so absolutely necessary here.

But we may take too bright, or rather, too careless a view of it, so that we hardly see any danger, as long as the young people do not come into conflict with the civil law.

Let us try to get a correct view of the situation.

a. *Childhood.* When a child from three to seven years old is glad to hear us tell about Jesus and His acts of love towards mankind, His good will towards children, etc., is glad to obey father and mother,

is truthful and upright if it has erred, etc., we should rejoice at these evidences that the spiritual life implanted by God is sprouting and growing. But religious prodigies, in whom the fear of God manifests itself as a mature Christian's sorrow on account of sin, and joy on account of grace, we should neither expect nor desire.

If we then in the succeeding years of childhood, from the age of seven or eight to thirteen or fourteen, take care that the germ of Christian life receives the heavenly dew and sunshine that it needs, the light and warmth of love and the guidance and admonition of a good example, we shall see such evidence of the growth of the seed that our hearts must rejoice, if we but have eyes to see with and hearts to understand with, so that we at least perceive that as yet the time has not come for the mature ear, but only for the green sprout, and that only a poor farmer loses courage as soon as he discovers that there are weeds in his field.

As the truest expression of the fear of God at this age, too, we must mention that the child honors father and mother.

And I say: Blessed is every one who does this! Therein he has a girdle of strength of inestimable value in the impending battle of life. And his life is blessed by the promise of the fourth commandment: *It shall be well with thee.*

b. *The age of transition* is properly designated as an extremely dangerous period. And it would, indeed, be well if both old and young had a better idea than most people have both of the special dangers of this age and of the power which, in spite of all, is able to carry the young people through the dangers and difficulties.

In the first place, we shall consider the year of confirmation. And I believe we may justly say that the serious thoughts during the preparation for confirmation, the impressions during the act of confirmation and during the first communion, do not pass by so entirely without leaving any trace, as it often seems. It is undoubtedly true of many more than we generally suppose, that the thought of God, the feeling of His presence, the good resolutions, and many other things that formerly grew in the soul of the child as feeble sprouts, during this time grow stronger, and that the voice of conscience about responsibility and trespasses is heard more clearly than before. From this comes a more conscious need of forgiveness, prayer to God for forgiveness, and power to be true to the good resolutions.

Why dare we hope that this is the case—the young people themselves as a rule not being very communicative concerning these matters? Because we older people look back upon our own experience in that age. And then I am sure that there are many

of us who can testify that such was the case with us. And we conclude that the young people of to-day cannot avoid having experiences of a similar nature, because the human heart, also the heart of youth, is the same everywhere and at all times, and God is the same.

The manner in which we give expression to — or perhaps try to conceal — the innermost life of our heart, may change with time, but the life itself in the depth of the soul is ever essentially the same.

The young people's lack of clearness in regard to their own relation to God combined with a strong feeling of diffidence in disclosing the emotions of the heart, which is especially prominent at this age, as a rule makes them uncommunicative and at times entirely reticent towards us older people. But we must not at once consider that as a sign of spiritual dullness or indifference.

But is this life? This aforesaid feeling of the presence of God, the admonitions of conscience in regard to sin and guilt, prayer to God for forgiveness, purpose to live according to God's commandments, and prayer for strength to be true to this purpose, which so many even of the so-called mediocre candidates for confirmation experience — is this the life in God?

Some will say yes, and some no, I believe. But I am sure we shall agree on one point: It is at all events not a sign of death.

What, then? Is it a sign that the divine germ of life that was implanted in the infant soul by baptism still lives and that it is just now making a renewed effort at stronger growth?

Yes, that *may*, at least, be the case. The life of the large child who remains true to its baptismal vow may manifest itself in this way, as long as there has not been so complete an awakening that the Christian life of the child has developed into the conscious life of faith and charity of the adult. In this way it may manifest itself — with a good deal of weeds, it is true, but more or less, with different individuals.

Whether this effort is to succeed or not depends largely on the development that has gone before as well as on the influences that are brought to bear on the youth, both in the home and outside of it, during the time immediately following upon confirmation. It may become an effort which falls powerless to the ground, a last effort, perhaps for a long time, perhaps for ever, because the earlier development had not given the power necessary to overcome evil tendencies and pluck out the weeds that spring up in one's own bosom, or because the youth is thrust out into the world, which with its iron-shod heel tramples upon the sprouts of life that were just about to grow and flourish. And it is unspeakably sad to witness the many instances in which this occurs.

The more should all true friends of youth rejoice when, for all that, it turns out as well as it often does. We must rejoice when we see that the baptismal grace, the influence of the Christian home, the influence in Christianity by teacher and pastor, the confirmation, etc., have, in spite of everything that tends in the opposite direction, been able to give the power of victory in the hour of temptation, so that the youth, as far as we can judge, has cleansed his way and tried to live according to the law of God, though, perhaps, he does not think of God very often and does not think just as you or I do, perhaps does not pray to Him very often, and does not pray just as you or I pray.

Even though the fear of God in the young people at the age we have in mind may not be just like ours, like father's or mother's, we must not immediately think: Now the life of baptism is entirely dead and gone.

Let us think of the religious life of the disciples of Jesus before they had experienced the great Easter and Pentecost. How very defective it was! What would have become of it, if Jesus had not cared for them with the earnest sympathy and understanding that He did?

What would have become of the disciples themselves, if He had judged thus: Your faith and charity avail nothing, for they are not of the proper

kind, too much infected by worldly and selfish interests?

But He does not judge thus. Ye of little faith, He calls them, yea, fools and slow of heart to believe. But He recognizes the beginning of life that is there, calls them His friends, hails them with a greeting of peace, does not reject them because there was as yet no pentecostal life — because they did not have the courage to testify.

He gives the needed time for development, and meanwhile lets them understand that He thinks well of them. Shall we not try to be like Him in this respect, also?

Or, let us older folk look back upon our own youth. Who was it that did most to help the weak beginnings of life in us to a healthy growth in the period of transition, and later on? Who was our best support? Was it those who gave us to understand that they considered us to be spiritually dead and treated us as such? Or was it those who let us feel, without making us conceited, that they thought well of us, often better than we did ourselves? No one with a little experience will hesitate at the answer.

And thus we will try to think well of youth where facts do not compel us to think evil, feeling sure that we have the approval of our Savior, who never broke the bruised reed or quenched the smoking flax (Matt. 12, 20).

These remarks are especially addressed to us older folk, to father and mother. For I have been pondering what tender Christian hearts may have suffered when they thought it necessary to say of their own son or daughter—"entirely dead to the life in God, however kind and good in every other respect." Therefore I want to try to be of some help to such parents with an encouraging word. Friends, let us not be too ready to think evil—never believe the worst, unless facts compel us.

Furthermore, I have thought what great harm we older folk do if through want of understanding we judge unjustly in these matters, and so I found a twofold reason for trying to say something by way of guidance, hoping that it might be of benefit to some one.

And last, but not least, I have been anxious to say to you, young people:

You are richer than you think, for the germ of eternal life was implanted in you in the hour of baptism, a life which has every qualification for unfolding here in time in faith and charity and every good deed according to the example of the life of Jesus Christ, and hereafter to unfold in eternal glory. It is therefore important that you guard and nourish it well. For if you do not do so, it may fare as the seed in the field fares when it gets no sunshine and moisture—it withers and dies.

### 3. Not a Pillow, But an Incentive.

I do not want to make a pillow for any one's conscience. I have not intended to say that some of you young people do not need awakening and conversion. Indeed, not. We are all in need of that.

For it is not only the spiritually dead who are in need of an awakening. Just as the vital powers in nature are awakened from their winter slumber by the light and warmth of the spring sun, so in this case. The spiritual life which God by baptism implanted in the unconscious child is gradually awakened when the Spirit of God is permitted to testify to the awakening consciousness of sin and grace. And you must not suppose that you are through with this awakening. No, you need ever to be awakened anew, that you may be more awake. Every Christian needs a constant awakening.

Neither is it only the spiritually dead that are in need of conversion. According as it learns to distinguish between right and wrong, the child who is true to its baptismal covenant must day by day turn away from sin and say no, whenever tempted, and turn to God to do His will. But this is just what you and I must continue to do as long as we live.

Therefore I said that we all need awakening and conversion.

But awakening and conversion will always be

different in one who has remained true to his baptismal covenant, from that in one who is fallen.

Not a pillow for the conscience, but an incentive, do I wish my speech to be, an incentive to use all diligence in striving to make sure your calling and election.

Let us again think of the twelve. What would have become of them, if they had said: "When the Exalted Master has called us His friends and greeted us with peace, we need nothing more," and then had rested easy?

But they did not do that. No, they continued with one accord in prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit. And what would they have accomplished without the baptism of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost?

My young friends, you also need a baptism of the Spirit to enable your inner life to break forth and develop into the conscious life of faith and charity of the adult and to grow unto a perfect man in Christ.

May this be your constant prayer: Fulfill on me, O God, Thy promise of the outpouring of the Spirit! even though you have by the grace of God been preserved from the great fall, by which life is generally lost.

According as God answers your prayer, it comes to pass that you become more and more seriously concerned about your salvation, more now than dur-

ing childhood years. Your eyes are more and more opened to that which is sinful and evil in heart and mind, in word and deed. Your conscience is more wakeful and tender; you feel a more conscious need of the great grace, the grace of forgiveness; and you receive more power from God to win in the struggle against sin.

And according as God answers your prayer for the gift of the Spirit, it also comes to pass that your eyes are opened to the glory of Jesus Christ; He becomes more glorious to you; and your soul clings to Him as your Friend and Savior, your Lord and your God.

But this is awakening, conversion, and faith, as these may manifest themselves in one who has remained true to the baptismal covenant.

### III.

## The First Communion.

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### 1. A Large Child.

A vision rises before me.

Yesterday was Confirmation Sunday. To-morrow communion will be celebrated for those who were confirmed. One of them sits alone in his room, can not bring himself to retire as early as usual, must sit up a while—to think it over.

Partake of the Lord's Supper to-morrow! So near has it come, this which I have often wondered about, sometimes feared, lately dreaded.

No, not dreaded. That would not be right, the pastor said. But I fear I dread it a little, anyway.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar? What did the pastor, the teacher, the textbook say?

Well, I remember only a little, and understand much less. But that is just my own fault. I am afraid I have not been serious enough. O, how I wish I had thought more seriously of this before,

for then, I suppose, it would not have been so hard for me now! Would that the day were past!

I heard A. and B. encourage one another by saying: "Why should we take it so seriously? I, for my part, certainly will not worry about it, no, not any more than . . . , and not I, either." They said something else, too, of which I neither dare nor will think.

I also heard C. say something about not communing. "Why take part in something of which one doesn't understand the least? What's that good for? No, it's just brave to have your own opinions and dare to admit that you have your mind made up and don't only follow the crowd."

I wonder if he meant it seriously, and if he (she) really will stay away.

At all events, I can not stay away. For it is decided that I am to partake. Though no one has said that I must, I know well enough that father and mother want me to—and God desires it, Jesus wishes it.

I must go this one time, anyway. It sort of belongs to being properly confirmed.

The body and blood of Jesus Christ—under bread and wine, can that be possible?

Yes, Jesus has said it, and with God nothing is impossible.

If it were not for this terrible word: "He that

eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself”!

To whom do these words apply?

How I fear that they apply to me,—perhaps to many others, too, but, of course, that does not help me.

I should examine myself, it says in our textbook, examine my repentance of sin, my faith in Jesus, and my new purpose; but I cannot find that I have any of all these.

Yes, I certainly have sin, but repentance — — —? Sin — against the fourth commandment, against father and mother. I am afraid I never have been as kind to them as I should have been. I remember that time — and that time, and many other times. O, how I wish that I had been much better. But I do not repent as I should. And it certainly is not the fourth commandment only that I have sinned against.

Would that I could repent as I should!

Examine my faith! I wonder if I have any true faith?

What is faith in Jesus?

True faith is that a repentant sinner lays hold on Jesus as his only Savior, finds refuge in Him and His merit, and trusts in Him with perfect confidence.

Yes, I know that, all right. But have I such

faith? Am I a repentant soul, and do I lay hold on Jesus as my Savior? I really do not know.

It seems to me that I take refuge in Him and His merit, for I know no other recourse. But I am afraid that I do not trust in Him with perfect confidence, because I am so full of fear.

Examine my new purpose! Is it my honest purpose to desist from all sin? Is it my honest purpose to do the will of God — better hereafter than before?

Yes, I think I do want to, but still I am afraid that my purpose is not as honest and sincere as it ought to be.

No, I am afraid that there is nothing in me which is as it ought to be. O God, be merciful unto me, a sinner!

But now I remember that that was one of the last things the pastor said to us when he spoke about preparation for communion: "If you have nothing else with which to come than the sigh of the publican, you are well prepared. It may be," he said, "that it will seem as though you have neither repentance nor faith and that you will feel very poor and helpless. If so, come with this prayer in your heart: God, be merciful unto me, a sinner! And you will be heartily welcome as a guest of our Lord Jesus. For He receives sinners that desire grace."

Praise God, how this eased my heart! I will try to cling to this and be of good cheer.

This man went down to his house justified, said Jesus of the publican, and his sins were forgiven. The same He will say to me: Thy sins are forgiven thee, peace be with thee!

Thanks be to Thee, dear God, that Thou forgivest my sins and that Thou lettest me be Thy child! Lord Jesus, bless the communion for me tomorrow! Amen.

And then — goes to bed and sleeps like a child.

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This newly confirmed youth surely was a welcome guest at the Savior's communion table. And if we came in such a state of mind, we received blessing from our first communion, although we did, perhaps, not see clearly wherein this blessing consisted and, perhaps, do not see it clearly unto this day.

If we came in such a state of mind, I said. I do not mean that all of us thought and felt exactly the same. Perhaps some were more developed, and thought and felt more, others less. But if you look closely at the image of the soul which I just showed you, I think many of you, perhaps most of you, will find something in which you recognize yourselves. And I know that all those who were not entirely indifferent and despised the holy things, had at least this sigh in common: God, be merciful unto me now! Lord Jesus, let me be Thine! Help me, that I may

ever be with Thee! But that was the state of mind of the publican as it may appear in a child.

But this is entirely too little for one who has been confirmed, we perhaps think now, when we are a few years older and have had various and more serious experiences,—entirely too little repentance, prayer, and faith. And perhaps we are inclined to think that such communicants are rather injured than benefited by their communion. But thus we should not think.

Confirmed youths of from fourteen to sixteen years of age are generally large children, as far as the development of their religious life is concerned, as well as in other respects. There may, indeed, even at that age be such a conscious and decided breach with the commandments of God and the childhood faith that the young person must be said to have fallen from baptismal grace. I am sure there are some among us who with horror have seen something of that. And there may be awakening, conversion, prayer, and faith, just as we find them in adults. But more often there is neither the one nor the other.

What is there, then?

Then this is the condition of the large child: It is drawn to God—and shrinks back from Him; there is unquestioning faith and there is yearning faith; now and then there is a feeling of sin and of guilt, but less

of what we adults understand by repentance, less of what we understand by prayer, but still both repentance and prayer—after the manner of childhood. One moment the child may be heartily sorry for some error, the next moment the grief may be entirely gone; one moment a sincere sigh: God, help me to be Thy child and not to sin against Thee! The next moment — forgotten and gone.

This is because the child, also the large child, is more impulsive than we adults are. While the emotions of us older folk may be deeper, like the great ocean wave, those of the child are more like the little ripples that ruffle the surface of the water.

But the emotions of the large child, that have been alluded to, repentance, prayer, and faith, are worked by the Spirit of God, just as surely as are the corresponding deeper emotions of the adult.

It is the same breeze that passes over the great ocean and over the little pond. And still no one asks why there are not as mighty waves on the little pond as on the ocean. Every one knows that it is because the pond is so small in compass and in depth.

The mind of the child is like the pond.

## 2. Confessional Sermon, Communion Address.

If I could reach all of these large children with a confessional sermon or communion address before their first communion, I would bring out what I am about to present to you now, not all at once or in one speech, but a few thoughts at a time. But in the following I want to collect that which to me would seem especially appropriate on such occasions.

“Abide in me, and I in you!” (John 15, 4). These words Jesus spoke to His grieving friends the last evening that He was with them before His death.

Abide in me! the Savior says to us, to all of you, to each one of you to-day. Abide in me!

In order to abide in Him one must have come to Him.

You have come to Jesus in holy baptism, have been grafted into Him by baptism as when the gardener takes a small, weak branch and graft it into a vigorous tree.

And you have come to Him later on in years of childhood every time that you have let the Word and Spirit draw your heart to God, so that you wanted to belong to Jesus, to do his will and shun sin.

And every time you prayed: Lord Jesus, incline my heart to fear and love Thee, hold me fast unto Thee, and keep me from sin! you came to Him.

Every time the grief of sin compelled you to go

to Jesus and pray: Lord, forgive me what I have done, help me that I may not do it again! you came to Jesus.

And if your heart was in the confession and promise that you made at your confirmation so that you were in earnest, you came to Jesus on your confirmation day.

To-day, when you think of the years and days that are past, think how graciously and faithfully the dear Savior has led you and borne you unto this day, I am sure you heartily wish that you had been better and more obedient than you have been, and that you had never grieved Him. And I am sure that, especially to-day, you see more clearly than before that you lack much of having been as kind and good as you ought to have been. Surely you recall more than one time that you were not so kind and obedient to father and mother, or so friendly and good to sister or brother, as you should have been. You remember how you transgressed the fourth commandment as well as several others. You can not forget how God knew it all, even the evil thoughts in your heart, and that which no man saw or heard. God saw it all, God knows it.

And when you think of all this, you heartily desire: Would that I could properly repent, and would that I had a true living faith!

But then you do not find, either, that you have re-

pentance and faith with which you may be perfectly satisfied, and you feel so very poor and helpless.

But during all this, your heart sighs: God, be merciful unto me, a sinner! Lord Jesus, forgive me my sins, let me be Thine!

But again this is coming to Jesus.

And hear what the Savior to-day also says to each one of you who comes to Him in this way. He says: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Keep that word in your heart and say: Thanks be to Thee, Lord Jesus, that Thou wilt not cast me out! Thanks be to Thee, that Thou receivest me and that I may be Thine!

Behold, then you have this day also come to Him.

And now it behooves you to abide with Him and in Him.

How is this possible?

In the first place: You must continue to come to Jesus in the future as in the past, ever anew come to Him.

You must let the Word and Spirit of God draw your heart to God, so that it may ever be your desire to belong to Jesus, to do His will, and to shun sin. You must hereafter, as heretofore, pray: Jesus, incline my heart to fear and love Thee, hold me fast unto Thee, and help me against sin. And when you find that you have sinned, you must go to Jesus now, as before,

and pray: Lord, forgive me what I have done and help me, that I may not do it again!

In order to abide with Jesus you must constantly come to Him anew, just as we come to Him when we take His word to heart and when we pray to Him.

But because Jesus saw that these disciples with whom He supped the evening of that Maundy-Thursday, needed something besides the word and prayer, in order to abide with Him, He gave them the Sacrament of the Altar, the sacrament of His body and blood, and said: "Eat, drink, this do in remembrance of me!"

And He has seen that you, too, need something besides the word and prayer in order to abide with Him. Therefore He has invited you to His communion table to-day.

With genuine sympathy He said to Peter when He foresaw the approaching dangers: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

With the same disposition He looks upon each one of you and says: You will also be sifted as wheat. You will be tempted by your fellow men, by friends and enemies, and you will be tempted by the evil thoughts of your own heart, more hereafter than before. And the devil is active in all this as he was in the temptation of Peter. He adds fuel to the fire

of temptation to bring about your fall. He who sifted Peter will not spare you. But that you may be able to overcome in all temptations, that you may ever abide in me and I in you, I have set my communion table in the congregation and invite each one of you: Eat, drink, this do in remembrance of me! He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

O, when I consider that it is the invitation of our precious and glorious Savior himself that I can announce to you, that you are this day invited to receive the most precious of all gifts which He has to bestow upon His friends here on earth, invited to enter into the most intimate communion with Him, so that they are fulfilled on you, those words that He spoke to His disciples: "You in me . . . I in you," I feel something of what I suppose the poet must have felt when he said: "O would, my God, that I could praise Thee with thousand tongues by day and night!"

In other words, I wish that I were able to unfold to you the glory of the Sacrament of the Altar in the way it should be done, so that you might approach it with cheerful hearts and ever be desirous of returning.

You have seen mother take the little child in her arms and press it to her bosom, and you knew that the child fared better there than any other place on earth. Were it weeping, the tears ceased; were it

fearful, it now felt perfectly safe on mother's bosom; were it weary, it found there sweet rest.

Thus Jesus draws you unto Himself at the communion table. There you approach more closely to Him than ever.

But even the best of our earthly blessings, for instance, the safety, the peace, the rest of the child on mother's bosom, will ever be an imperfect image of the blessings which God bestows upon us at His table, where He binds us more intimately to Himself than is possible on any other occasion.

I would fain help you to approach it, as you would a festival of joy, with a cheerful heart. For the Sacrament of the Altar is, indeed, a feast, though much more glorious than all that is called joyous and festive, even as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Is it not ever so, that the more loving and good he who invites us, the more we appreciate the invitation? But here you are invited by Him who in infinite love stoops down to the weakest disciple and says: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."

Is it not ever so, that the more wealthy, the more exalted and mighty the host, the greater is the honor of being among the guests?

If our king, our own dear, good king, gave a dinner at his palace in Christiania, and you were

invited, would you not consider it one of the greatest honors that could be shown you?

But if the king also addressed you personally, called you his friend, and assured you of a hearty welcome in his house and at his table, as often as you wanted to come, and then added: If you are in need or in danger, just come to me, and I will help you — you would think that it was beyond measure great.

But here the host is the King of kings, the Son of man, who sitteth on the right hand of the Father, the Son of God the Father, He who could say: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth, . . . all things that the Father hath are Mine."

Therefore, it seems to me, we have reason to sing:

O great bequest,  
My thought it overwhelms,  
To be His guest,  
Who in the highest dwells!

If you ask: What spiritual gifts do I receive in the Sacrament of the Altar? we reply: You receive Jesus, the Savior Himself.

In the sacrament you receive Him, who in infinite love sacrificed His life and blood to save you. You receive Him who, after being dead and buried, conquered death, arose in glory, lives in eternity, and is with His own unto the end of the world. He who will raise up me and all others from the dead, sit in

judgment, and take all those who here on earth have received Him as their Savior home to His eternal, glorious habitations, which He has prepared for all His followers,— He gives Himself to His guests at the communion table.

Friends give one another gifts of friendship, princes give princely gifts, but Jesus, our Savior, gives more,— He gives Himself. Here you can sing:

“In my heart’s shrine,  
O Savior mine,  
I Thee confine  
With all Thy gifts and graces.”

Do not make yourself worry by brooding over how bread and wine can be the body and blood of Jesus,— not represent, and not be changed to, but *be* the body and blood of Jesus. I believe the terms in which Luther has interpreted the glory of the sacrament are the best that have so far been found in earthly language, and explain our Savior’s meaning most satisfactorily. But I do not believe that any of us shall be able to understand this mystery thoroughly until we reach home and shall see everything in the light of eternity. Until then the words of St. Paul will apply to Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and the Catholics and to all of us: “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.” But it is plain to everybody that, when Jesus said: “This is my body . . . my blood,” He wanted to say that in the sacrament He gives us

Himself in the most effective manner, as verily and effectively as it can be done while we are here on earth.

Cling to this fact, then, that He gives you Himself, that He may abide in you with the benefit of His death and the power of His life, with all His grace and love.

But, you ask, how can I, with my small and narrow heart, be able to receive such a great gift?

Yes, dear child, I have asked myself the same question. And I must confess that it is unto this day the great sorrow of my life that my heart has been and still is too small and narrow to receive all the wealth of comfort and peace and joy and power which the Lord Jesus has wanted to give me when He has given me Himself in holy communion. I can, indeed, very well understand you when you speak of your narrow heart.

And still, in the sacrament you do receive the Lord Jesus with all that He is, even though your little heart is narrow.

It is the same sun that is reflected in the tiny drop of dew and in the mighty sea. The drop and the sea both in their way receive the whole sun and hide its beautiful image, although neither the drop nor the sea is large enough to contain the mighty source of light.

Of course, every figure of speech is inadequate.

And the weak point in this comparison is, you will notice, that the drop and the sea receive only an image of the sun, while in the sacrament we receive Jesus Himself.

Jesus is the sun. And you must receive Him as the dew-drop receives the image of the sun until you can receive Him as the mighty sea receives it.

Does not the little forget-me-not receive the full light and warmth of the sun as well as the mighty palm? Does not the sun give itself to the little plant as well as to the large tree? It glows just as warmly and beams just as brightly upon the plant as upon the tree, and gives to both enough for life and growth. And at the same time there are thousands upon thousands of other growths, large and small, that receive light and warmth from the same sun, and all plentifully.

And thus, though you feel small and slight, you receive the entire Savior so that He is yours, verily belongs to you with all that He has — to you just as well as to the most mature and advanced of the Lord's disciples.

And every time you return to His communion table He will increase your faith, your love, and your obedience, so that the life which flows from Him into your soul, when He gives you Himself in holy communion, may from year to year grow stronger.

But make diligent use of the power He gives.

'Then you will experience that the power is present. Nay, in what other way could you experience it?

Make use of the power you receive day by day to overcome your selfishness and to do what you know to be the will of God!

Strive to be kind and friendly when you are tempted to unkindness; to be patient when you are tempted to impatience; to be morally pure when you are tempted to impurity; to speak the truth when tempted to falsehood; to do good to them that annoy you; and to be of help and comfort and joy and benefit to whoever needs your help — just as Jesus was!

Strive, by the power which Jesus gives you when He gives you Himself, to purge all that is sinful, evil and ugly from your heart and life, and strive to be like Jesus in all your life and conduct! Then you will experience that it was not in vain that Jesus said: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." You will experience the power and the blessing of the sacrament.

### 3. Do Not Neglect the Lord's Supper!

"I must go to communion this one time, because it sort of belongs to being properly confirmed, and later — let it be."

Many have chosen this course. Their reasons may have been of various kinds.

There were those who even at this early age positively turned away from God and therefore also turned their back upon the communion table.

Others remained away for other reasons. I believe that a faulty view of the sacrament very often is the reason. Likewise a faulty view of what our condition must be in order that we may be blessed by our communion.

"It is so dangerous to partake of the sacrament, because one might eat and drink damnation to oneself. That is the reason I stay away," say others.

When this is urged by grown-up people as a reason for staying away from the Lord's Supper, I am sure it is in many cases only a pretext. They know that they live in sin and do not want to abandon it, but they try to gloss over their condition and seek reassurance by trying to make themselves and others believe that it really is conscientiousness, honesty, even "piety," which causes them to neglect the Lord's Supper.

Where there are pangs of conscience and sincere prayer to God for light and comfort, this condition, that one does not dare to partake of the sacrament because of unworthiness, will at least not continue. For God has promised to give light to the sincere.

But when large children, the newly confirmed, choose to remain away after having partaken of the

Lord's Supper that one time, even though they do purpose to fear and love God, I have reason to believe that in a great many cases the cause really is that they think it is so dangerous to commune. But, perhaps, it never occurs to them that it is dangerous to remain away.

How I wish I might say to these: Do consider that it is your Savior who invites you to His table! He surely knows better than you do, better than any person on earth, what you need. He, the only one who has both might and means, both power and will to make your soul truly strong and free and light and beautiful and good and happy and joyous and blessed in time and eternity, He invites you to His communion table because He sees that you need it, invites you to the table that He gave His life and blood to establish for His friends on earth. He invites you, and you turn your back and do not come! Perhaps you think that this is not dangerous?

You would not dare to insult the king, no, nor even a friend among your equals, by slighting an invitation. But here the King of kings, the Friend of all friends, invites. How do you dare to remain away?

And when you consider how loving and kind He is who invites, how can you possibly want to stay away?

I want to say: For God's sake, and for your own salvation's sake, do not stay away from the communion table!

But not only that. I also want to say: Dear young people, partake of the sacrament often!

Do not let yourself be restrained by the fact that there are others who come only once or twice a year! When sincere Christians do not come oftener, it must be because of the mistaken idea that there are so many things in which we must be prepared before we can with a good conscience commune. Friends, do not make this mistake!

There are not so "many things," but only one thing that is needful, and that is that you do want to come to Jesus, want to come to Him to receive power to overcome your sins and to be like Him in your life. You may be sure that you will receive more of this power if you partake often than if you commune only once or twice a year. The oftener you come to the communion table, the more will you feel at home there, the more confidential will the relation, the closer and more intimate will the union be between you and your Savior. But the more rarely you come, the more like a stranger you will feel at the communion table. And at last you may feel so much like a stranger that you feel as though it is not for you, you may just as well stay away, and so you remain away entirely.

What do you lose by remaining away from the Lord's Supper?

God grant, that I might tell you as I feel that it ought to be told!

In the first place: You get out of the habit of coming really near to your Savior. If you still try to pray to Him once in a while, you feel that your mind and your thoughts are so wonderfully strange towards Him, and He—as a stranger to you, in spite of all that you know and hear of Him. And then the result generally is that you pray less and less, and that you neglect more and more to do as Mary did—sit at the feet of the Savior and listen to His speech. Thus you soon get out of the habit of praying and of using the Word of God.

And if you still occasionally attend public worship, you do not feel as though it is anything especially for you. The reading of the texts, the prayers, the sermon, the hymns,—you hear it all, but seemingly at a distance. It all seems so strange, both the expressions and the thoughts, just because your mind and your thoughts are out of the habit of considering the things that pertain to the kingdom of God.

But the fact that you develop along these lines is in itself a very serious matter.

You, who were in baptism adopted by the Lord God in heaven, the God of all grace and love, adopted as His child and grafted into Jesus Christ as a branch

in a tree — these are His own words about the relation between Him and you — in order that His holy love might flow into your soul and become the motive power in your life, just as the sap of the tree flows into the branch and twig — you become as a stranger in your Father's house, a stranger to your God, to your Savior — is that not a very serious matter?

And, in addition, comes this: The less you have to do with your God and Savior, the more room, the more receptivity will there be in your heart for the things that are not of God. And then, when in the hour of temptation the thought comes to you: Yea, hath God said —? what have you to defend yourself with? Then your mind is suitable soil for the words of the tempter, and you yourself will soon begin to ask, not as *he* asks for God for whom it is of vital importance to find Him, but as one who wants to doubt. There is no limit to the questions of doubt that may arise in such a soul both about God and His Word, about Baptism, about the Lord's Supper, about Heaven and Hell, and many other things.

And, mark you, this grows on a person. It begins in secret. To begin with, one has kept these doubts quietly to oneself, perhaps as a painful secret. But he did not seek power from God for an honest combat, and so the doubt grew stronger and stronger, until he finally went so far that he in very earnest tried to rest contented with the thought that "it is all

nothing," and cry out to others that God, the Bible, eternal salvation and damnation is altogether nothing.

When in the hour of temptation you hear: Ye shall not surely die — what the Bible calls sin is not so dangerous, it does not bring death and damnation, on the contrary, pleasant to the eyes, to be desired to make one wise, it brings happiness and joy of life — then I ask again: What have you to defend yourself with? When you have become a stranger to God, without that power which our Lord Jesus gives His followers in Word and Sacrament, what power have you with which to overcome in the hour of temptation? Your power is gone.

Therefore I say again: For God's sake, for your own salvation's sake, do not stay away from the communion table! You forfeit too much thereby.

#### 4. Who Should Commune, Then, and Who Should Not?

All you whose souls long to come to the Lord Jesus and become partakers of His grace, and who have a fixed resolve, though it may be weak, that you will fear and love God and shun sin.

You must come to the communion table, and come often.

When I have tried, to the best of my ability, to present the blessings of the sacrament and encour-

aged a diligent use of it, I have thought especially of you who feel yourselves weak. You who feel that you are lacking in faith and the fear of God, and therefore often dread coming to the Lord's Supper, and dread staying away, you are the ones I have especially wished to encourage: Come to the communion table, come often! There is blessing in it. For God's sake, do not stay away! It is dangerous to neglect such signal grace.

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But I suppose I should not close without saying a few words about coming "unworthily" to the Lord's Supper and about the danger which it may entail.

Those who live in sin and want to continue therein,—

those who do not desire that union with Jesus which the sacrament is intended to give,—

those who do not want to receive the power of Jesus Christ to overcome sin and to live according to the will of God,—

such must not commune. Because, if they do so, they ridicule our Lord Jesus. Then they are like him who betrayed the Son of man with a kiss—approach Him outwardly as if they were his friends, while the heart is turned away from Him, and life and conduct are contrary to His will and a disgrace to His name.

You ask if it is dangerous for such persons to

commune? Yes, here the old saying applies better than ever, that he who will not know the light shall burn himself thereon.

It always injures the spiritual life to take sacred things in vain. And the spiritual injury which follows such abuse of the sacrament is:

the blunted conscience is more blunted,

the hypocrite becomes more secure in his hypocrisy,  
the shameless become more shameless,

and their hearts are being hardened more and  
more as long as they continue to come to the Lord's  
table without repentance and faith.

### 5. Postscript to Chapter III.

It is sad to think of what our youth has missed by staying away from the Lord's Supper.

But I believe that we older Christians are largely to blame for this, and have many errors to correct in this matter.

Our instruction about the sacrament, our textbooks, our books of prayer, our preaching, all are to blame. Is it not true?

Has not our instruction and our preaching, also to the young people, often been of such a nature that it must be said to have been better adapted for mature Christians and partly for old sinners and hard characters rather than for "large children"?

Must not the young people get the impression of what they hear and read that especially the Sacrament of the Altar is something which lies so far above their power of comprehension that it would be senseless for them to have anything to do with it?

Has not our instruction about the Lord's Supper often been of such a nature that those who listened to us must have received the impression that the proper preparation for worthy communion demands so very much of us?

And has not the danger of being an unworthy guest at the Lord's Table been emphasized to such an extent that the danger of staying away has been forgotten?

And I have no doubt that the thought of the proper preparation for worthy communion and the danger of being an unworthy guest has kept many an honest soul, especially among the young people, from attending the Lord's Supper.

If I only could reach them all, I would say to every teacher of Christianity in the schools, to every pastor who is preparing a class for confirmation, to every leader of Christian young people's associations, and on the whole, to every one that may have a chance to be of assistance to the young people in this matter: For God's sake, see that your instruction and your admonitions concerning the Lord's Supper are plain and to the point!

Try to enter into the spiritual life of "the large child"! And then let it be the main purpose of your instruction and preaching:

To awaken a desire to come into a closer and more intimate union with the Savior;

to show that the Lord's Supper is given us just to satisfy this need and longing, because, according to Christ's words, it brings us Himself;

and to present the glory of the sacrament in such a way that the young people may gladly partake of it and desire to come again often.

An overwhelming majority of the throng of young people which is yearly admitted to the adult membership of our churches by confirmation and is admitted to the first communion, later on remains away from the table of the Lord. What a loss — to each individual, to the congregation!

Friends, we must not look upon this without using all proper means of doing what can be done to keep the young people in the congregation of communicants, and to keep the Sacraiment of the Altar for the young people.

I have tried to point out what I think we must first set to work with: to make our instruction about the sacrament more plain, to the point, and practical, more adapted to the stage of development of our young people.

## IV.

### Fallen and Risen.

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#### 1. My Son Was Dead.

a. *How did it happen?* Temptations many and of many kinds. Who can trace them all?

We shall try to point out some of the dangers of youth, and shall first mention the purely physical development at this age. One becomes large and strong rapidly, and, although one can not exactly see daily growth, one can watch the growth by years, sometimes, perhaps, by months. Where the mode of life is wholesome and the organs are healthy, it may seem as though there is an excess of strength. We all recall, for instance, the boy of fifteen or seventeen working in the harvest-field. Up at daylight, as the others, and keeping pace with the other workmen all day long. But coming home in the evening, he simply must run a race. No use talking about taking a nap after dinner, as do father, the older brother, or the hired man. No need of it, and no fun in it. No, then you are more apt to find him

at the carpenter's bench or the little saw-mill by the brook. There is always something to do.

But let us not forget that there is something tempting in becoming big and strong so rapidly, perhaps bigger and stronger than father. In the first place, it tempts one to look down on father and to forget the filial respect. And when the child's natural feeling of weakness and dependence is replaced by a strong feeling of being "grown-up," being able to stand on one's own legs and take care of oneself, then comes the temptation to forget God, as if one could get along without Him, too.

In the most intimate relation to this bodily growth stands the growth of the inner man, which can, however, not be measured in feet and inches, but is nevertheless just as real. We think especially of the self-esteem, the critical acumen, and the thirst for liberty, which in the age of transition often develop so rapidly that it quite takes aback us older folk in whom the development comes more evenly and almost unnoticeably — that is, if we are still developing.

It ought to be easy to understand that in itself the fact that there is such an inner growth in the young people ought to be a source of satisfaction and joy to father and mother. And, indeed, it must be there, if the child is to become a normal adult.

But we have reason to rejoice with fear when we consider how the awakening self-esteem and thirst

for liberty in the youthful mind, which according to nature's laws still lacks the balance which experience has given us older folk, tempt to emancipation from both divine and human laws, at the same time as the awakening critical acumen without revealing itself as a greater power of insight than that of the child in many spheres of life—is just as ready to discover the mistakes and weaknesses of the older people as it is to make free with matters that should be above youthful criticism.

Furthermore: Many a father worked and struggled to give his son a better education than he himself had received. Sometimes, perhaps, it was from sheer vanity, but often from nobler motives. Of course, we all know that a really worthy son will not respect his father and mother the less because they have by their work and self-sacrifice helped him to a better education than they themselves could acquire. Quite the contrary. But it should not be forgotten that there is something tempting for youth in the consciousness of knowing a great many things of which father and mother are wholly ignorant. That, too, tempts one to look down on them, to forget the fourth commandment. And I am sorry to say that there is no dearth of examples that only too many have been overcome by this temptation.

In addition to this we have companionship, which is not always what it ought to be, though it may

not be what we generally call evil. Of course, it is a great mistake when some parents think the best would be to keep the young people away from all companionship. In most cases this is absolutely impossible, and even if it were possible, it would not be beneficial. We are placed in this world to live and work among our fellow men, and not to hide ourselves, and therefore the young people must learn to live their lives among men, and not only among old people, but also among those of the same age and development.

But we must try to understand the trials and temptations which may come from this direction, also. And here we especially want to point out one thing, and that is the fear of being jeered by one's companions.

They say, for instance: "Oh yes, we understand, you're sort of under the rod, don't quite dare to be grown-up, don't dare to for the home-folks?"

Many a lad of fifteen, sixteen years has lowered his colors before such a bombardment. The ordnance may have been light or heavy, according to the bringing-up and the tone of those concerned. But the real sting, that took effect, was generally this: ". . . not grown up, don't dare to." That he could not stand. No one must believe that he was such a "child" now that he had to consider the opinions of father and mother; and thus he fell. If it was not what we

generally call a manifest fall, he did, at least, get farther away from the fourth commandment, from father and mother, from the home. He surrenders his girdle of strength and the dangerous inclined plain is before him.

Or: "Perhaps you have scruples -- because of religious prejudices, out of consideration for father's and mother's dogmas, and the like? When you come right down to it, that fellow is excellent timber for a genuine pietist," etc.

Is it not true that often it does not take more to make one think that it simply will not do for him to be different from the others? He must at all events "make believe" that he has outgrown his childhood beliefs, father's and mother's fear of God, church-going, and the like. And it certainly is game to be one who dares to think what he pleases and talk as he pleases.

Game? Oh yes, one tries to think so. And still you may be sure that more than one of these "game" young people felt like a cowardly wretch after thinking it over alone, cowardly, because he had not dared to say a word to his companions in defense of their common childhood faith, father's and mother's faith, not even by silence had dared to show that he disapproved of their too free and wanton speech.

In this I have especially thought of the dangers to the rising generation of boys.

But certainly, many of the dangers alluded to are common to boys and girls, for instance, the tendency to consider oneself more grown-up than one really is, the tendency to forget the fourth commandment and towards emancipation from the authority of father and mother, weakness over against the influence of evil companions, etc.

If we were to mention some special danger to young girls, it would, perhaps, be the temptation to vanity, coquetry, the desire for finery, all of which may fill the youthful mind with foolish and useless thoughts to the exclusion of every serious thought of one's relation to God.

In this connection I shall only mention that the awakening of the sexual life at this age brings with it its special temptations, and for further treatment of the subject refer you to my book "Our Homes and Our Children," IX-X.

Add to this that the age of transition awakens that part of our nature which is "enmity against God" (Rom. 8, 7). For there is something in the nature of all of us which dislikes God, an ill-will towards Him, because He is holy, pure, and good, which we are not, and in His light our impurity is disclosed, our errors and omissions uncovered. Hence this desire to keep Him "at arm's length." In early childhood this ill-will towards God slumbers. At first it gradually awakens, until in the transitional

age it becomes a power which threatens to usurp the mind and thoughts and life.

I have pointed out some of the dangers peculiar to youth. But here, too, I want to say that my remarks are intended especially for us older people, especially for father and mother. For if we thoroughly understand the special dangers of youth, we shall be far more successful in giving them the help they need.

At the same time, however, I wish to direct an earnest and well meant warning to you, young people. I do not want any one to use what I have said as an excuse. Let no one say: "I must cut loose, it belongs to youth, and I can't help it."

You must not cut loose and trample upon the commandment of God, neither the fourth nor any other commandment. For you will injure your soul if you do. And then, what would it profit you, if you gained the whole world? It is by "cutting loose" in that way that so many promising young people have wasted the joy of youth, their good conscience, their peace of mind, their happiness, their lives. And still they were at one time just as buoyant, brave, and cheerful as you are now.

No, make use of the power which God gives you to strive against every temptation to depart from the path of righteousness of God's commandments. Be not cowardly enough to shirk this struggle! Strive

honestly, and you will by the help of God triumph over all evil tendencies! For God gives the sincere success.

And then I want to say to you, young people, that every one of us older people who realizes what is at stake, thinks of you with genuine sympathy. Do not think that your elders do not understand you and do not even care to understand you! You may be sure that in a great many instances you are more thoroughly understood, both by father and mother and many others, than you even imagine. Of course, there are altogether too many who lack the proper understanding and sympathy. And, indeed, there are many enough who, even though they have considerable understanding and sympathy, for some reason or other have been unable to give their children the help they needed to pass safely through the critical period under discussion, and therefore feel as debtors on this score—and who is entirely without that feeling?

But remember, my dear young friends, there is one thing that even the weakest among us will do, provided he knows how to pray to God—we do pray for you, pray God that He will give to each one of you the light and power that you need in your difficult position.

One of these praying fathers has told me the following: He had certainly tried to do his best for the

children, but he never could feel satisfied that he had done as well as he should have done in all things. But as the children grew older, he felt it more and more a duty to pray for them. His prayer was not very long and not very remarkable. "O Lord, pour Thy Spirit upon them, grant them power of victory in the hour of temptation, give light in their hearts and light upon their way! Teach them to know the need of salvation by grace and to see the glory of Jesus Christ, and draw them nearer to Thee, my God, my Savior! Amen."

Thus he prayed upon his bed at night, year after year. And he repeated the same prayer for all of the children in turn, mentioning them by name, and adding an Amen for each one.

And if I could reach some father or mother with these words, I would say: My dear friends, let us do likewise! Think not: "It is of no avail!" Let us never forget that there is One who hath said: "*Ask, and it shall be given you!*" And He is certainly able to keep His promises. For His is *all power in heaven and on earth*.

It certainly is true that a great many young people have been sustained and have been carried safely over the abyss where others fell, and that many fallen ones have been helped to rise again by such intercessory prayers. I can not tell you how it comes about. But let us find consolation in the thought that

neither the Lord nor His apostles have made it a condition for the hearing of prayers that we should understand that which is incomprehensible. Let us be satisfied to cling in faith to the promises of the Lord, as the child confidently accepts father's word and promise.

In the foregoing we have pointed out some of the dangers that threaten to destroy our young people, i. e., threaten to stifle the beginnings of spiritual life which God in their infancy implanted in them by baptism. And we can not overlook the fact that to many these dangers became so great that they could not endure.

And too many there are who in this transitional age have lost their most precious possessions in life. Just as a couple of frosty nights in August may injure the green corn and bring to naught the farmer's best expectations, or as the rank weeds may smother the good seed until it is entirely overcome—so it often happens here.

There were some who with determination deliberately turned away from their childhood's God, thinking that they could not enjoy life or find true happiness until they had torn asunder the bonds and broken down the barriers by which their childhood home had tried to protect them.

Therefore the fourth commandment was generally the one that must be trampled upon first, in order

that one might feel really "grown-up and free," and then one after the other of the commandments was set aside.

And there were others who gradually fell away from God, until they more or less reluctantly gave up their faith and lost their peace, and finally tried to rest content with a life without prayer, without God.

Then followed, in both instances, a life with selfishness as its great motive force. But selfishness is ever a merciless master. And there is no limit to the way it can harry and devastate a person's life.

b. *Is it not dangerous?* No one must suppose that it is not dangerous to live away from God in youth if one only returns to Him later. The youth must not think so, father and mother must not think so.

For just as surely as there is forgiveness of sins, salvation and healing in Christ for every sinner who turns to Him, however far and however long he may have been astray, just as surely must every one who has lived in sin carry many and varied marks and scars.

In the first place, there are the memories, those sad and bitter memories that return again and again. In the course of time you may forget many things that you would like to remember. But the memory of this or that sin that you are so very anxious to forget returns again and again. Pray for forgiveness,

receive forgiveness, believe forgiveness, you may by the grace of God. Still you would give your heart's blood if you could render undone that which is done, but all in vain. The memory remains. That you must keep, even after you become a converted and believing Christian.

Furthermore: Where a life was led in sin and shame, for instance, drunkenness and licentiousness, the resulting injury to the health may be very perceptible during after-life, even though the person may have risen in Christ.

And then the injury which comes to the soul from having lived without God!

Here we think of something which is much worse than that the time spent without God is wasted time and that a life in sin brings in its train bitter memories for the subsequent Christian life, and in many cases broken health. That is certainly all very sad. And yet it is much worse that the most delicate organs of the soul may be injured and that we never can become what we otherwise might have become under God's gracious guidance. A wound that is healed generally leaves a scar. And as an otherwise beautiful face may be disfigured by scars after the wounds are healed, so may the Christian soul which for a time has been harried by the spirit of unbelief or selfishness bear such marks that the image of God can not develop as clearly as it might have done if

the union with God had continued uninterrupted. Thus one who has been a worshipper of Mammon may even after having been converted to God be more tempted to avarice and stinginess than others. One who has been ruled by selfishness for a time, will find it so much harder to learn obedience to God and in the days of adversity to say from the heart: Not my will, but Thy will be done, O Lord!

And take it all in all: As the vision of one who for a time lives in constant darkness is injured, so a human soul may by excluding itself from the light of God injure its power to receive this light. If we have lived for a time in unbelief, and our hearts have been closed to God's love, our power to believe and love has been injured, or our receptivity is weakened, so that we shall, as believing Christians, hardly be able to receive as full a measure of grace, light, and power from God as He would give us and as we could receive if that weakening had not taken place.

Do we hereby belittle the redemption of Christ? Indeed, not. But we emphasize the fact that it is absurd to say that it does not matter that one lives without God in youth, if one only returns later.

## 2. Behold, He Liveth!

a. *Awakening, conversion.* The change taking place in a soul which, after having departed from God, again, by the grace of God, returns to Him, Jesus Himself has described to us in the parable of the prodigal son.

1. The prodigal *acknowledged* that he had erred — “he came to himself.”
2. He *felt* that he was miserable and helpless — “I perish with hunger.”
3. He said: “*I will* arise and go to my father,” and he arose and came to his father.

Here a change takes place both in acknowledgement, will, and emotion, and a change such as we see here, is conversion.

Mere acknowledgment of error is not conversion. Even though we feel quite depressed, it is still not conversion. Such a change in acknowledgment and feeling may be called an awakening, though it is a rather superficial awakening — and a superficial acknowledgment of sin, if my greatest sorrow is that I have brought misfortune and misery upon myself. The more serious the awakening is, the more will our great sorrow be that we have offended God, offended His holiness and righteousness, disdained His love and dishonored His name — the more will this confession become our confession: “Against Thee, Thee

only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.—Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called 'Thy son.'

There is no thorough conversion until the Spirit of God creates a will in our hearts which says: "I will arise and go to my Father."

There is no real conversion unless one in faith takes refuge with the Father in the name of Jesus, and with our Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior.

We are considering the parable of the prodigal son. This, as well as the two parables immediately preceding it (of the lost sheep and the lost penny), is specially intended as a reprimand to the Pharisees for the uncharitable judgment which they passed upon Jesus and His relation to the publicans and sinners. And therefore He shows them that when it is to their own interest, they do the very things for which they censure Him. But at the same time the parable contains much more, as is clearly shown by the addition to the first two: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God (in heaven) over one sinner that repenteth." And therefore I have no doubt that in this story of the prodigal son we have a right to see a representation of what takes place in the hearts of those who depart from God to live according to their own desires, away from God, but later come to themselves and return to the God they deserted—as well as a representation of our

heavenly Father's disposition toward these erring children who return in repentance and prayer. And thus believing Bible readers have understood this parable at all times and unto this day, and therefore it has brought comfort and peace to innumerable sad and anxious souls.

We must not, however, on this point suppose that the Savior intended to tell us in the one speech all that He might have to tell of awakening and conversion. And we must not use this parable in support of the opinion that the awakening and conversion must be just exactly alike in all cases.

The essential thing, that which is common to all who really have been converted to a life in God, is that they *came to themselves* and that they *arose and went to their Father*.

Otherwise they may have differed in many respects.

One has wallowed in sin and shame, wasted his substance in riotous living, as did the prodigal son. Another has lived an outwardly decent and honorable life, but has nevertheless been far away from God, because selfishness, self-righteousness, arrogance, ambition, avarice, unkindness, anger, severity, bitterness, contempt for God, and other sins of the heart have entirely controlled him. In both these cases the first awakening is often characterized by strong emotions: remorse, terror, dismay.

And then there are others, to whom these words of Jesus apply: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." With this class the first strong influence whereby God draws the soul from death to life is not especially directed towards the emotions. It may act through the acknowledgment, so that one seeks refuge with Jesus, because, by the enlightenment of God's Word and Spirit, one understands that it is impossible to do without Him. Therefore he accepts Jesus as his personal Savior, prays to Him, follows Him. But such a person has come to God, is a converted and believing Christian. Or, the strong and determining influence of God may be directed towards the will, which is inclined and drawn to God, for instance, by some great boon, which causes one to tremble at the presence of God, to tremble with thanksgiving and worship, so that one gives his heart to God for life. This person also became a disciple of Jesus.

Both of these persons felt grieved at their sins, but this feeling was not the strongest emotion in their souls when they came to Jesus and surrendered to Him. The strong emotions may come later in life, during the walk with the Savior, or they may fail to appear.

Differences in this respect may be due to a difference in disposition, a difference in bringing-up, a difference in career, etc.

b. *Faith in Jesus Christ.* What is faith in Jesus? How do I believe in Him? I long for Him, in order to find peace and salvation. If I have been away from God before, I "arise and go to Him" and pray: God, be merciful to me, a sinner! Forgive my sins for Jesus' sake! Jesus, Savior, let me be Thine!

This is the beginning of faith in one who has been astray, a yearning faith. And of the publican in the temple, who approached God in this manner, Jesus Himself says these words (Luke 18, 14): "This man went down to his house justified," that is, his sins were forgiven.

And let us mark this well: Such a yearning faith, in which the soul seeks refuge in the grace of God in Christ, is a justifying, saving faith. This Christ Himself has told us in the story of the publican.

If you come with the heart and the sigh of the publican, the words of Christ will certainly apply to you when He says: This man went away justified — from such a meeting with God.

Mark you: the heart of the publican and the sigh of the publican! Then you do not ask to be saved only from the guilt and punishment of your sin — in order to sin anew thereafter, but with all your soul you seek to be saved from sin itself. First it is necessary that you be awakened to a true knowledge of your sin and to feel your need of the saving grace. But faith proper is that you take refuge with God

and pray for grace. Or, faith is this: "I will arise and go to my Father," hence, in very truth, a matter of the will.

And at the same time, faith is a gift of God.

Every one of us, who really has come to Jesus, will say with all his heart: Unto Thee, my Savior, unto Thee be all the glory! My natural desire was to depart from Thee; but Thou restrainedst me, and by Thy Spirit Thou gavest me a new will, so that now I want to come to Thee and abide in Thee.

But no one needs to remain standing at a distance, saying: I can not come, I can not believe. God's call goes forth to all of us in the Word, and His Spirit is in the call, in the Word, to work faith in our hearts.

## V.

### Weak Faith, Increase of Faith.

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My faith may be weak. The assurance, of which there must ever be a little even in the weakest faith — for, without it, no one would “arise and go to his Father”— the assurance that God will forgive me my sin and own me as His child may be very small, and then I have only very little peace, little joy, and little strength. But if I arise and go to my Father, or, in other words, if my prayer for the forgiveness of sins and for strength to live according to God’s will is sincere, I have faith.

To those who reject this view and call it being under the law and under condemnation, I think we may say, calling attention to the two parables of the prodigal and the publican in the temple: *Christ has not rejected it.*

Some Christians remain in this yearning faith for a shorter, others for a longer time, and not a few, no doubt, all their lives. There are some who think that it ought to be thus. If we confess with the apostle John, “now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3, 2),

they may think that we are entirely too “strong in faith” and are in a sad plight.

But just as surely as you become a pardoned child of God, having forgiveness for all your sins, the same moment that you “arose and went to your Father,” breathing the prayer of the publican: “God, be merciful unto me, a sinner!” — however weak your faith may have been — just as surely it is the will of God to increase your faith. And therefore it is that we pray: “Lord, increase our faith!”

And if God has increased my faith, how do I then believe on Jesus?

I believe in such a way that I can say with a confident heart, more confidently now than at first: I believe that Jesus Christ has redeemed me — with His holy and precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. I believe that for His sake I have forgiveness and that daily I receive the full forgiveness of all my sins. I believe that God is my Father and that I am His child, that Jesus is my Savior, and that I am His own, and that God the Holy Spirit is and ever will be my Comforter in life and in death, so that I need never be led into unbelief, despair, or other shameful sins and vices.

How did I attain to such faith?

It is the work of the Holy Spirit, who has enlightened me with His gifts. It is all the work of the Holy Spirit, both the first weak beginning of the

yearning faith and the increase of faith which has since taken place.

But any one who desires an increase in faith must make use of the means of grace, through which the Spirit works.

We often hear this complaint: I do so wish that my faith might increase, that I might believe more hopefully and confidently, and experience the joy of assurance. But I do not succeed.

Let me ask you then: What is it you are so anxious to believe?

Well, I am sure you are anxious to believe that you are a believer. There are many who secretly want to believe on their own faith—instead of on Jesus. But then they do not find such a faith as they had desired to find in their hearts, and therefore they are—anxious. Or—which amounts to the same thing—you would like to believe that you are really converted, justified, and born anew. You probably think that if you could but believe that first, your faith would soon be strong and all would be well.

Alas, I know a little about how a soul may go for years in this way, and “spend its money for that which is not bread and its labor for that which satisfieth not.” Some of these may be near the Kingdom of Heaven and still, perhaps, never enter therein. Others may be in the Kingdom of God, but still have

only little peace and little strength, their faith is weak and wavering, because they lack that "full assurance of faith" of which the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks (Hebr. 10, 22), they lack the increase of faith to which God is so desirous of helping them.

If this is your condition, if you long for peace, if you would like to believe, but do not seem to succeed, then let me give you a bit of advice. I know it is good advice, for it is according to the Word of God and has been tested by the experience of many. Here it is: "*Look at the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*" Look at this, that Jesus Christ has paid for your sins with His blood, and ask yourself if you believe that this is sufficient.

For the time being, let all those things that you think are so uncertain rest: whether you have the true faith, whether you are truly converted and born again, whether you really are a child of God or not. Let all those questions remain unanswered, for the time being, and sink your whole soul in this truth, which is so sure and secure that even the devil is unable to break it: The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is shed to the last drop as a ransom for you; He has redeemed you, a lost and condemned creature; He has purchased you and honestly paid for you, in order that you may be His own.

Look thus at the Lamb of God, and it shall come to pass that by that look your soul will be filled with

praise and thanksgiving, so that you will be able to say: God be praised! Then He has borne *my* sins, purchased for *me* the grace and good will of God the Father, *and I am His own, because He has purchased me.*

But then the Holy Spirit has worked the full assurance of faith in your soul by the gospel of salvation in the blood of Christ. And this same gospel you must ever again have recourse to, in order that your faith and peace may be renewed and increased and that your power may grow.

And if we had a better understanding than we generally have of the value and significance of Baptism, our assurance of the adoption as children would be greater and our faith stronger.

When our assurance of faith is small and meager, let us say to ourselves: This applies to me, this truly applies to me, all that Jesus has purchased by His work of redemption. For in Baptism I was, with the mention of my name, assured of this by God Himself. Just as every child's share of the inheritance belongs to the individual child when the administrator has apportioned the estate of the deceased parents and put every child's share in the bank in the child's name, so the benefits of Christ's redemption were transferred to me when I was baptized.

And furthermore: If we were more frequent and better guests at the Lord's Table than we are, we

should also have more assurance of faith and more strength.

The assurance of faith which is thus worked by the Spirit of God through the Gospel, the correct view of our Baptism, and the proper use of the Lord's Supper, is what we must especially have in mind when reading Hebr. 10, 22 and Rom. 8, 16, and when speaking of that increase in faith during which the first weak, yearning faith develops into a more cheerful and hopeful faith with more peace and more strength.

That the Spirit may also work and testify more directly, no one of us will deny. But God has directed *us* to a faithful use of His Word and Sacrament, by which He ordinarily works and edifies the life of faith and love in us. Therefore we must not expect to feel a joyous assurance of being a child of God, before we dare to take God at His word when He assures us of the forgiveness of sins and the adoption of children in the Gospel, in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper.

But then no one must suppose that he is done when he can appropriate to himself the comfort of forgiveness and taste some of the joy and peace which follows. Far from it!

Now the Holy Spirit wants to continue the work of increasing your acknowledgment both of sin and of grace. Now you are to learn to know much

better than at first your sin and your daily need of new grace as well as the love of your heavenly Father, the faithfulness of your Savior, and the depth of the riches of grace, which He has to give to poor sinners who come to Him. And He, who first worked in you the desire to come to Him and abide with Him, will continue to incite and urge, draw and call your soul, so that you will ever anew turn away from sin and return to God, will arise and come to your Father and your Savior, and thus abide in Him.

And mark well that our *abiding* in Him is that we *ever anew come to Him* to receive new and more beautiful grace and ever to become more intimately united with Him. There is no *abiding* in Him without such constant *coming* to Him.

And so even here, during our increase in faith, it is in reality the will it depends on, that God gets a stronger and stronger hold on our will. If that takes place, God will cause you to grow unto a perfect man in Christ. Then the weak yearning faith develops into the consoling, confident, and cheerful faith with more peace and greater strength — strength to vanquish and root out besetting sins, strength to suffer without murmuring when so it is God's will, strength to make sacrifices for God, strength to do the will of God.

And this is one of the special characteristics of all true faith that grows in a God-pleasing way, it

does not take long before we feel a need of doing something for God. We do not only want to *enjoy our blessings*, but we want to *be a blessing*.

And if you grow in a God-pleasing way, you will find more and more that you do not only want to do some good work or other to please God, but you will want to live your lives for God, you will perform every duty which is incumbent upon you, even the least of them, in obedience and fidelity to Him, not as man-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ. (Eph. 6, 6.)

And then you have this inestimable gain — light from above falls upon your lives, so that you can look upon all your work as done in the service of God.

And every believing Christian who performs the work of his earthly calling in this spirit is not only himself blessed with light from above upon his work, but he is at the same time fortunate enough to be himself a small light which shines in his circle, upon his surroundings.

By your quiet conversation in the true fear of God, you may, even without words, testify about your Savior in such a way that many may thereby be drawn to Him.

That faith, which is more than the first beginning, will, as before stated, do something for God, *not only receive, but also give*. And remembering

the words of our Savior: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25, 40), you will be anxious to help those who are in special need of your help. You will be anxious to wipe away tears, ease pain, comfort, gladden, and bless as far as you are able.

And the words of Jesus: "As I have loved, shall ye also love," will be to you not a heavy yoke that you can not bear, but it will be a truly beautiful word, which tells you what the power of the redemption of Christ will help those to who believe on Him.

During this development you receive more and more of the spirit and disposition of Jesus Christ, and your conduct becomes more and more like His life and conduct here on earth, His who could say: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."

And during this development shall be fulfilled upon you these words of our Savior: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15, 5), and: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15, 8).

With these remarks I have wanted to point out the growth and development of your faith, to which God will help you if you are but willing to be taught and to be faithful pupils in His school of grace. But obedience and willingness to learn is necessary, and, first and last, fidelity.

Therefore strive to be faithful, my dear friends! Be faithful in watching and praying! Be faithful in the use of God's Word and the Lord's Supper! Be faithful in all your life and ever use the power you have received to root out besetting sins and to do the will of God! And then, God bless you! Let us pray:

"O Jesus, Thou my Savior faithful, true,  
To death and grave Thy boundless love Thee drew.  
Grant me Thy pow'r that to my grave's dark mold  
I faithful, true may be, and pure as gold!" Amen.

## VI.

### Godliness Is Great Gain.

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This was the opinion of Paul the apostle (1 Tim. 6, 6), and I am heartily persuaded that he was right. And if I could help to bring you to the same persuasion, I should be well pleased.

You will surely meet those who are of a different opinion. You will meet those who say that the godly are either deceivers or deceived. And you will meet some who admit that godliness is a good thing, but who still crush the tender sprouts in the vineyard of the Lord under their iron heels — out of absolute lack of judgment. To begin with, a few remarks about the first and the last mentioned.

#### 1. Deceivers.

“Awakened, godly-minded! They are certainly no better than the rest of us. They are unreliable in money matters, borrow without paying, some squeeze the pennies and are niggardly, some are prodigal squanderers, who let others give security and — pay.

'They are tyrannical in their homes towards children and servants, live in constant domestic quarrels, are fault-finding, like to think and speak evil of all who have an opinion different from their own, yes, some of them can not even be trusted in their relation to the sixth commandment."

Such expressions are often heard about those who have, in some way or another, declared themselves to be on the side of the Lord Christ. Whether it is whispered in the corners or shouted from the platform or spread broadcast in the papers, it is equally sad, if true.

And, sad to say, there is sometimes more truth in such talk than there ought to be. But if any one wants to make you believe that all awakened and godly-minded people are deceivers, do not let yourself be disturbed by the cry. It would be foolish to destroy all currency because a counterfeit bill may have been discovered now and then. And we do not reject all the apostles because there was a Judas among them.

No one would try to issue counterfeit money if there were no genuine money. Neither would there be any false Christians if there were no genuine, true Christians in the world.

But as the words of the Savior: "One of you shall betray me," caused the apostles anxiously to ask: "Lord, is it I?" so the thought of false Chris-

tians should urge us to sincere self-examination and with trembling to pray with the psalmist of old: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" the way that leads to eternal life! (Ps. 139, 23. 24.)

## 2. Deceived.

"If you want to become a pietist, you will be a useless person all your life. Beware of that!"

"The awakened waste so much time in reading and praying, going to prayer-meetings, etc., that they neglect their work. Take care that you do not become like them!"

We know that sort of warning, do we not?

"You used to be such a happy and jolly girl, and then I liked you. But now you are such a goody-goody, that I can not stand you."

Thus wrote a young dandy to his sweetheart in breaking the engagement because she had become converted.

The meaning of these and similar expressions is clearly this: If the awakened are not deceivers, they are at all events deceived. Those among them who are in good faith and really sincere in their godliness and prayers are as a rule intellectually limited

persons who are easily deceived and do not themselves know how foolish they are.

Well, I would never think of denying that there are intellectually limited persons among the Christians, people who are not very gifted. But the same holds good among the non-Christians. They are not all geniuses, either.

"Shall I congratulate or condole? I hear that your daughter has commenced to accompany her religious cousin to these revival meetings, or whatever they may be called."

These words were addressed to an elderly man, whom no one would think of classing among the awakened. His scoffing friend expected to hear an outburst of indignation at the small religious excitement in the place, something about eccentricity, humbug, or the like.

But the other answered very quietly: "I believe these young people are wiser than either you or I. We old fools might learn something from them."

### 3. First Creep, Then Walk.

What father would meet his infant child with a kick and say, scolding: "Shame on you, child, you crawl like a toad! Walk like a man, I say, or lie still!"

It seems to me, that when a critic attacks the excesses, which, so to speak, of physical necessity

seem to accompany every serious religious awakening, as though the movement itself were more dangerous than death, he is like that father.

"They have commenced with something they call prayer-meetings over in the neighborhood of N. N. Simple and unlearned — might well say, ignorant — men and women pray, one after the other, and they all kneel during the prayers. That must be Methodistic? Or Catholic? That might be dangerous, if it should spread. It will be necessary to put a damper on it betimes," etc.

We know that talk, too. And laity, and clergy too, sometimes, just as zealous and just as lacking in understanding, are agreed that now it is necessary to guard churchliness and Lutheranism. And so they commence, sometimes right in church, with severe lectures against the "sectarianism" of the awakened, and warn against them.

O, could I but hope to reach them, how I should like to give all these "anxious" people this advice: "Try to acquire so broad a view of these religious movements in general, and those in your own neighborhood in particular, that, remembering the old saying: first creep, then walk, you do not begin by attacking the awakened with upbraiding for being Methodistic or sectarian, even though you might see things that would be more displeasing to you than that they assemble for prayer-meetings and that they

kneel during the prayers, yes, even if marked excesses and weaknesses should appear, as often happens in the earlier stages of a Christian life, especially when it begins with a serious awakening.

Say rather: Thank God, there are signs of life! However incomplete and weak it may be, it certainly is better than death.

Enter into the movement yourself with understanding and sympathy, as those who sincerely rejoice at every sign of life and every beginning of life! Then make use of the respect and confidence you undoubtedly will gain, to lead the movement with tender hands into the proper channels.

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After these digressions, let us try to enter upon — at least approach more closely to — our subject: Godliness, great gain.

In the words quoted, the apostle has given expression to a truth that is just as valid to-day as it was centuries ago. And his words will for all time contain a message to Christian people. To me these words have spoken not only of the gain, but also of the responsibility in being a Christian. We shall briefly consider these two things.

#### 4. Responsibility.

Is there any responsibility in being a Christian? Yes, there is.

There is a terrible accusation against the people of God in the well-known words: "The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles through you" (Rom. 2, 24).

But this occurs unto this day, when godless people from Christian nations settle in heathen lands.

The lives of such colonists have, sad to say, often been perfectly heathenish, and they have used their superior skill and knowledge to take advantage of and to abuse the savage or semi-savage tribes among which they dwelt, and to enrich themselves at their expense. Gruesome things does history relate thereof. Here is one incident of many:

"Be baptized, that you may go to heaven," said a Spanish monk to a dying heathen.

"Do white men go there?" he asked.

"Yes, certainly," replied the monk.

"Then I don't want to go there. I don't want to go to a place where I shall meet such cruel people," said the heathen — and died.

The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles through you. This still occurs right in our midst, when any one of us who has confessed himself a Christian falls into flagrant sin and vice.

Then it is said: There we see godliness, Christianity; it amounts to nothing; when it comes to a test, the Christians are no better than other people; their godliness has not been able to sustain them. And that is in reality the same as to say that the God, to whom they pray, has been unable to preserve them. Thus is the name of God blasphemed by the sins of the "God-fearing."

And then the ungodly find a welcome pretext with which to excuse their sins, and to the sincere come grief and misgiving.

But even Christians who lead what we call a blameless life may be included in this sentence: The name of God is blasphemed through you. This is the case when God-fearing people lead a slack and easy-going Christian life, are content with a minimum of sanctification, do not use all diligence to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. (2 Pet. 1, 5-7.)

The result of negligence here will be one of two things: Either that the inner life, the life of faith and love in God, will be impoverished, become poor in comfort and peace, joy and power, but rich in despair, sighs, and wailing, poor in holy Christian courage, activity, and enterprise in the work for the

progress of the Kingdom of God on earth. poor in the light that should make the Christian a sunbeam in the darkness of this world — in everything weaker than one need be, even though there may still be some of the life in God. From such Christians our God and Savior does not receive the honor which He might have had if there had been more diligence.

Or the result of negligence will be that one little by little entirely forsakes the life in God, which once was awakened in the soul, and retains only empty forms and phrases; one “says a prayer,” but *does not pray*; reads and hears the Word of God; toils with Christian activities, but all as a work of duty or habit; speaks of sin and grace, of righteousness and judgment; judges others, but does not judge oneself—if one does not give up even the forms and phrases, not caring a straw for all of it, and persuading oneself that this about faith and godliness was all visionary and imaginary.

So in either case this sentence applies: The name of God is blasphemed through you— even though there have been no so-called manifest fall.

The poet of old had every reason to say: “Many eternally captive lie, who once were on the way.”

God preserve you, my young friends! And God preserve every sincere Christian soul!

But do not lose courage! God will preserve you if you will but stand on guard and fight honestly

against every temptation to depart from the plain way of God's commandments.

God will preserve you, and God's name will not be blasphemed through you, and you will not be an offense in the world. On the contrary, that your good works may so shine before men that they may by them be made to glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Pet. 2, 12), is the beautiful task that you have as the disciples of Jesus. And to accomplish that, God will help you if you will only remain intimately near to Him.

### 5. Gain.

Is there anything to gain by being a Christian? Yes, "godliness hath promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4, 8). But come and see! It is best to see for oneself.

a. *A Sunday evening.* A tenant's cottage nestles under the hillside. There live pious people, "readers," or awakened, they are generally called in the parish. Let us enter, preferably unseen; we want to see without being seen.

It is Sunday evening. The family has just sat down to the supper table, father and mother with a couple of children between four and seven. The older children have already left home to earn a livelihood among strangers.

Porridge and milk, and nothing more. Perhaps you consider that frugal fare for Sunday? But see how healthy and happy the children look, and how satisfied and thankful the parents are!

Now they all fold their hands. "In Jesus' name come we to meat," says one of the little ones, and father adds: "Lord God, heavenly Father, bless our food for Jesus' sake! Amen."

And then they eat with such a blessed appetite, all four, that the millionaire Rockefeller might have turned green with envy, had he seen them.

"God be praised eternally, that we are fed abundantly," says the smallest one, repeating every sentence after mother, and father closes: "Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the food in the name of Jesus! Amen."

After the little ones have been tucked into bed, they sit a while longer, the two.

We surely have a good landlord, Grethe, says Hans.

Yes, that is certainly true, replies the wife. When I think of all our landlord and his kind wife have done for us and our children, it seems almost too much.

And still you don't know all, says Hans. Now you shall hear what he said to me today as we happened to walk together from church.

I have thought so much of Peter, your son, lately, I might say night and day, he said.

I felt uneasy, and thought perhaps Peter had gotten into some trouble. But then he continued:

He has now been in my employ for five years, first as driver, and these later years as man of all work, and I will say this, that a more trustworthy man I have never had. And still, now I believe that I shall try to get rid of him.

What does Landlord mean by that? I asked, and I think he noticed that I was pretty anxious.

O, I don't mean anything bad, anyway, he said. Only this, that it might be a good thing for Peter, if he could have a course at the agricultural school.

I suppose it costs money to go to school, I said. Is that anything for a poor tenant-boy to think of?

Yes, he said, but then I have thought this, too, that if Peter wants to go to this school, and if you and your wife have no objections, I want to back him up with what little Mammon he will need during the school days.

I am ashamed to say, Grethe, that when I tried to say something in reply, it seemed as though a lump came into my throat all at once, and it was all I could do to utter these words: Landlord is entirely too kind.

O, don't say that, he said, for when Peter has finished school, of course, I want him to come back to the farm to see what he amounts to, and then he won't get away before I have gotten my money back.

with interest, and more, too, he laughed. That will be at least seven years of service without board and pay, or how was that about that old patriarch?

Let the patriarch rest in peace, Landlord! I said.

It sort of hurt me, that jesting allusion to the patriarch Jacob. For to me it has been such a great thing in the heaviest hours of my life to be able to say after him these words: "Lord, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me," that whenever I am reminded of Jacob I see him especially as he was at the ford of Jabbok, as the one who wrestled with God and was blessed because he was humbled.

Therefore I couldn't do anything else, I said: Let the patriarch rest in peace, Landlord! I think he understood what I meant, and he hastened to add: Well, I am sure I didn't mean any harm by it, my dear Hans. You see, the thing is that when I think of your bright and strong boy and that after a finished course at the agricultural school we shall get him back twice as able as he is now, it makes me so wonderfully good-humored that it is easy to say something in a jest without really thinking it over.

Think of it, Hans, that he made the offer entirely of himself, that he wanted to help Peter to the agricultural school! Isn't our landlord kind, though,—and isn't God good!

Yes, indeed, Grethe dear. But listen, still you don't know all.

Thank God for a harmless jest! continued the landlord. I remember well the time when *that* was an unknown thing to me—the winter when diphtheria took both my sturdy boys and it looked for a long time as though I should lose mother, too. But enough of that. Later God taught me to *thank Him for all things*, and now there is light from above even on the darkest paths.

How much good it did me, Grethe, that he said that! And because he was so open-hearted, it was just as though the string of my tongue was loosed, and I said:

Yes, right there we have the remedy, Landlord. Thanking God for the sorrow brings healing from the sorrow, it liberates us from sinful sorrow, is a defense against unbelief, despair, and other sins.

But then we must not ask our own heart if it *feels* thankful, or our own reason if it can understand what good there can come from that which gives us so much pain. To thank God in holy defiance of both feelings and reason in the faith that He is love and that all things work together unto good for us if we fear and love Him, is the great art, the art that is never entirely mastered.

May God teach us that ever better and better! added Landlord.

But listen now, Hans, he said again, after a little while. That Olaf-boy of yours, who drives for me

now, will have to look around for something else, too, I think.

O dear me, Landlord, won't you keep him on the farm any longer? Mother and I thought it would be well if he could stay on the farm a couple of years more for his board and clothes as before, I said, and make himself as useful as he could.

And later on, at the end of those two years, then what? he asked.

Well, we poor folk don't generally think so far ahead. But if he could after that get a position with some good people, like the one Peter now has, we should be very happy and thankful, said I.

Like Peter, yes, said he. There certainly is the making of an able and good man in one as well as the other. And as far as that goes, I should have no objections to seeing Olaf, too, as an agriculturist. We shall not very soon have too many efficient farmers. I wish we had many more than we have, so that our entire country might produce two stalks where there now grows one. That doesn't sound like a great deal, but it would be just twice what it is, Hans, twice as big a crop all over our country. That would amount to something, wouldn't it? And all patriotic men must have this as their aim, "two stalks for one," if the "economical restoration of the country" is to be more than talk.

But from this it does not follow that every man

must be a farmer. We need other good men, too. As far as Olaf is concerned, I believe that I have discovered that he is cut out for an engineer. Perhaps in time he might become one of those who can make all the fertilizer they want from air and nothing.

In that case, he, too, might benefit farming, I should say, just as much as any agriculturist. For now fertilizer is the gold in farming, sort of the capital, without which all the agriculturists in the world, and the rest of us, too, can't get any farther than to — marking time.

As I said before, it seems to me that Olaf is just cut out for some kind of engineer, and that thought won't give me any rest until I shall have tried what he amounts to, provided he and his father and mother agree to it, of course. Let me see, he is just 16 years old now. A two-year high school course, then four years at the technical school, and we have the finished engineer — 22 years old. What do you say to that, Hans?

Excuse me, Landlord, for the time being I can say nothing, I replied. And that was true, Grethe, I couldn't. I felt the lump in my throat again.

It isn't necessary either, just at this moment, he said, for I understand, anyway, what you would say. You would say that going to school costs money. Wasn't that what you were thinking of, Hans?

Well, yes, that, too, and many other things, Land-lord, I said.

I have thought of the same things, Hans. That is, in the long sleepless nights, I, too, had plenty of time to think of other things than money. You understand that I mean especially that long winter when God had taken my boys to Himself. Among various other thoughts, there was especially one that ever returned: You must look about for some one to help, gladden, and benefit. Your own candidates for an agriculturist and an engineer, who are with God, don't need money for school or any other help. But there may be others who need it and whom God wants you to help.

And I may as well tell you at once: The reason my thoughts were fixed on Peter and Olaf was not only that they are gifted. But I have understood that they fear and love God, and that they honor their father and mother, so that they wouldn't for any price do anything that would offend or grieve you. Am I not right, perhaps?

So far they have, thank God, not grieved us, I replied.

That's good, said he. But the love of home, of father and mother, the desire to please them, and the fear of causing them grief, are a girdle of strength to the young people in the hour of danger and temptation. Therefore one can help such people

without risking that the help will be abused. The more I have studied the conduct and fate of people in this world, the greater has the old saying become to me, that *it shall be well with those who honor father and mother.*

Now you know my opinion, Hans, he said, as we parted. Go home now, and talk the matter over with your wife, and let me know in a few days what you decide. But I want to say, that it would please me very much, if my plan could win your consent and that of your boys.—Well, so long, Hans! he said, and give my regards to your wife!

Hans and Grethe sat a while in silence. Then she said: Now we must pray together over this, and then we shall have to try to sleep on it till to-morrow.

Or perhaps wake over it, added Hans.

Then together they read one of the psalms of David, thanked God for all His blessings, and prayed together for themselves and their children, for the landlord, and for—all men.

Thereupon they sought their humble couch and went to rest. Perhaps it took an hour or two longer than usual before sleep came; I do not know. But this I do know, that it was two happy people who here closed their eyes, after having in silent sighs once more committed themselves and theirs to the gracious care of the Lord, He that keepeth Israel and slumbereth not.

O happy people, in spite of their meager circumstances and their fatiguing toil from early Monday morning till late Saturday night, just as hard year after year, ever since they over 20 years ago started to clear and build under the hillside in this desolate and neglected place.

Does any one think that these people would have been just as happy *without the Christian faith and the fear of God?* .

I do not think so.

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The landlord, of whom we have been speaking, was Halvar, the owner of the largest farm in the parish, Storberg. But among the tenants and the other people of the neighborhood he was colloquially called *Landlord*, and always when they meant Storberg they said only *the farm*.

b. *Seven years later.* Peter has come home from the agricultural school, after a two-years' course. Landlord has made him the manager of his farm, and in the five years that have passed he has given him more and more liberty in the conduct of affairs. And Landlord is satisfied. For now there really does grow two stalks where seven years ago there grew only one; in other words, the farm produces twice the crop that it used to. The same is the case with Hans and Grethe's little place. That has also been benefited by the knowledge of the agriculturist and

partly, too, by his savings, when it was found desirable to do a little more ditching than father was able to do, or to experiment with calcium-sulphate on a piece of land which otherwise would have had to wait too long for fertilizing. And since his mother became a widow about a year ago, such help is doubly welcome.

There are those who whisper that Landlord with satisfaction believes himself to have discovered that his daughter Margit and the agriculturist look very favorably upon one another. But about that we will, of course, not say anything, as long as the engagement is not announced.

Olaf got his two-year high school course and four-year course at the technical school, was graduated with honors, and has since then spent a year as a stipendiary, first in Germany, and then at the large factories at Notodden, where he has accepted a permanent salaried position, to begin in the fall.

During his school years, he always used to spend his vacations at home on the little place under the hillside, and helped with the haying and the rest of the summer's work. And it is the same this year, with this difference only, that this summer he is doing all the haying and harvesting alone with the help of his mother and a half-grown sister.

Among the things that he has done besides the regular work of haying and harvesting, there is one

that I must mention, because I think it was so delightful.

"What is the engineer up to now?" Landlord asked one day, as he turned in at the place to see Olaf, and found him out by the well.

"I want to try to repair this thing," Olaf replied, "to see if it can't be forced to give as good water now as it did when we were children. During the last year the water has become so bad that the cattle will hardly drink it — much less can it be used for the household. But to carry water from the brook I think is entirely too hard work for mother, especially in the winter."

"What seems to be the matter with the well, then?" Landlord asks.

"As far as I can understand, only this," says Olaf, "that the timbers are old and partly rotten, so that every now and then little pieces of wood and dirt from the sides of the well drop into the water."

"Well, you are an engineer and, I suppose, understand it," said Landlord.

"Of course, well digging was not one of the subjects I studied, but I should like to make an attempt, anyway," said Olaf.

"Success to you!" said Landlord. "But remember that the well is at least 16 feet deep, and it has happened that such a hole has caved in and buried its man."

And, of course, some of the neighbors who passed by and saw what he was doing, had to tell him that he had undertaken more than he could accomplish. "He will never come out of it alive — as young and inexperienced as he is," they said.

He let them talk, saying occasionally: "Perhaps so," — or: "Do you think so?" — and went right on with his work.

And with the skill of an expert and the persistence of a tenant he worked early and late, took out the old rotten timbers, and put in new ones from bottom to top, and then dipped the well dry, and cleaned the bottom. And now the well gives as good water again as it did "when they were children." And mother does not have to carry water from the brook.

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The harvest-home is on at the farm. That is a beautiful old custom that Landlord inherited from his father and which he has kept up all the years he has had the farm.

All the tenants and their families, and others who have taken part in the summer and fall work, are invited to a banquet. The meal is served in the main parlor.

This is Landlord's thanks to the laborers for their help in housing the crop. But in the last ten years it has become something more. Since God succeeded

in drawing the hearts of Landlord and his wife to Himself — by taking their “agriculturist” and “engineer” from them — the harvest-home has become especially a thanksgiving to the Giver of all good gifts for all His blessings.

This year Olaf is again at the harvest-home. It is a long time since he was at home at this time of year. But he remembers well how he, as a little boy, every fall used to rejoice a long time beforehand at the prospect of going with father and mother to the harvest-home. It was almost like waiting and looking forward to Christmas, Landlord’s big parlor with lamps and strong light, with the large, old clock that played like a “music-box” every time it was about to strike, the large, beautiful pictures on the walls, he himself in his Sunday-best clothes, of which some article often was brand new, just as for Christmas, white linen on the long tables, and then all the good things to eat, of which he was allowed to eat as much as he was able to, and after that a bag of all kinds of good things to take home with him — that surely was something to look forward to !

And Olaf was surely not the only one who had fond memories from these harvest-homes. There were others, big and little, even old greyhaired people, who every year again looked forward with pleasure to the approaching festival. And I believe that the harvest-homes at Storberg have contributed

a great deal towards preserving and strengthening the friendly terms which here obtain between the landlord's family and the laborers.

As the clock strikes six, "the festival is rung in." It is the large, old dinner-bell of the farm that sounds — that well-known ring, and still, how entirely different now from the ordinary! This is the signal for all to repair to the festal room.

Slowly and gravely, as when they enter the church door, they pass through the broad hall and into the parlor, at least a half hundred people, counting old and young. That the big parlor is decorated with garlands and flags, they are accustomed to at the harvest-homes. But to-day everything seems more beautiful than ever before.

But what is this? In a prominent place on the wall two initials are seen, surrounded by small flags. Perhaps they are to signify Haakon and Maud, as at the royal banquet in the Turnerhall, of which some of the younger members of the company had caught a glimpse when they were in the city on that remarkable and wonderfully beautiful summer day? Yes, it is an M. But the first one, can that be an H.?

O; now I have it! whispers Mette to Lotte, it is P. M.—yes, guess now! O, says Lotte, it means Peter and Margit; their engagement is, of course, to be announced to-day. O,—great goodness, how interesting!

When all have found seats in the roomy parlor,  
they first join in the hymn,

Now thank we all our God  
With heart and hands and voices!

Thereupon Landlord opens the large family Bible and reads Psalm 103, to which he adds a prayer, thanking God for the produce of the year and for all other temporal blessings, and then a special thanksgiving for the comfort of the forgiveness of sins, for the peace of faith, and the hope of eternal life — praying for mercy and grace, blessings and peace upon all, big and little, old and young, "and, above all," thus he closes his prayer, "grant, O Lord, that whatever Thou in Thy wisdom and love mayest apportion to us of prosperity and adversity, joys and sorrows, may draw our hearts ever nearer to Thee, in obedience, in knowledge, love, and faith, until we inherit eternal Sabbath rest. Amen."

Then the victuals are brought in, and the whole company is seated at table as one large family.

Landlord asks the blessing of God upon their food, wishes all welcome to the table, and asks all to help themselves.

Pretty soon Landlord raps for attention and says: Thank you, all, men and women, young and old, for faithful summer and fall work. Next to the blessing of God, it is your faithfulness, care, and industry

we have to thank that everything has gone so well and that we now have the year's crop safely housed!

One of those who last year was with us here is no longer among us. God rest his soul in heaven! I am sure we all feel it as a loss that Hans Heien is no longer in our midst.

I can never forget what he was to me in that most critical time, that long and sad winter ten years ago. With his proved faith and his rich Christian experience he was a great help to me, when I was as weak as a child. And let me say at the same time: in his work he was among the first, a living example of the truth of the old saying: The best Christian is the best soldier. Blessed be his memory!

Blessed is he who leaves such a memory, said Baard Haugen.

Yes, and who has so honestly deserved it, added his neighbor, Anders Dalen.

The majority was moved. Many had hard work to conceal the tear that would steal forth.

For, indeed, there were some who at times had felt a little oppressed by Hans Heien's conscientiousness in small things and great, his straight-forward nature, and consistent honesty in all his work and all his conduct. But they could not do otherwise than respect his unfeigned faith. If there are any sincere Christians in the world, Hans is one of them, was a saying that was often heard among his fellow la-

borders, even from those who were not exactly of mother's best children.

Landlord's next speech was as follows:

I just want to hear if there is a single one in this company who will join in a good wish for a young person at this table who is generally called the agriculturist? By no means, whispered some wag, just loud enough for most of those at the table to hear. Now, it was just a public secret that the agriculturist was so popular that any one of the laborers would have been willing to go through fire and water for him, if necessary. So you don't want to? continued Landlord. No, I might have known that. He has sort of tried to be the manager of the farm, and that is ever a thankless task. And I suppose he has been trying to play the overseer of slaves from the days of Uncle Tom, and then, of course, he has gotten you all against him. I suppose he ought to be thankful that he has so far escaped being lynched.

So you don't want to join in any good wish for him . . . ? Yes, yes, we do, was now heard from many at once.

O, is that so? I thought you whispered no a little while ago; but it is true, I am a little hard of hearing of late.

Well, my dear agriculturist, now there grow two stalks where there used to be but one, and that was the object we had in view seven years ago. And for

the part you have played in realizing this object, and for faithful service in the many toilsome years—take your Rachel, if she will have you. When we give you Margit, our only child, we give you the best we have, and more no one can give. And still, for the young people there is *one* thing that must ever be valued more than to get the coveted one, and that is to get father's and mother's blessing in the bargain. And that you shall have.

Peter, you have honored your father and mother, and therefore it shall be well with you also when you put your feet under your own mahogany. For God's promise can not fail.

Margit, you have been the sunbeam in father's and mother's home, and therefore your own shall be bright and good and happy.

God bless you both and give you as much joy as you can bear and as much sorrow as you need on your future way, that is father's and mother's wish for you on the day of your betrothal.

Do we then all join in this wish: God bless the newly betrothed! A hearty and well-meant "aye" rings forth from the whole company. "Amen," says Baard Haugen. That was needed here, a plain "aye" was not enough, he thought.

After a short pause, Landlord again spoke:

My last speech here at the table, he said, is for the young engineer, whom we have the pleasure of

seeing among us at this festival, and that in perfect condition, as far as I can understand. The well did not cave in on him, and he escaped with his life in spite of all terrifying warnings.

The last seven years he has been in exile, nearly always away from home and from us. Many of you hardly remember the lad, who was ever busy, who built a dam and saw-mill in the brook when the men rested after dinner. And you who remember him perhaps ask: Wonder what he has been doing all these years, and wonder what he amounts to? Well, that time will tell. I suppose I ought to know a little about it, too, for I have simply tried to follow him from year to year, and I might mention to you a great many queer subjects that he has studied, and he has received excellent standings. And even if I should say that he had learned to make gold out of air and nothing, I might be telling the truth, but you wouldn't believe me. Therefore I will not say that.

But *one* thing I want to confide to you: Olaf has learned the fourth commandment in all these years. And if any one thinks that that is a small matter, I want to say to you that *it is the greatest and best of all that a young person can learn away from home*. And would to God that every woman and man, old and young, throughout the whole land would fear and love God and honor father and mother! Then there would be progress and national happiness in

this land. For the better Christian, the better soldier, applies in all circumstances of life.

And I feel constrained to say this to all of you as the best part of my experience in life: The better Christian, the better son and daughter, the better spouse, father and mother, the better tenant, laborer, landlord, artisan, agriculturist, engineer, etc.

My dear friends, let this truth be vividly imprinted upon our minds and shine forth in all our life, so that it may continue unto them that shall walk over our graves: The better Christian, the better soldier!

My dear Olaf, accept our most hearty congratulations! It has pleased me greatly to notice your fine standings and all your testimonials of diligence and progress in your studies from year to year, and it is a pleasure to all of us to wish you success with the results of your schooling and studies. But still more has it pleased me that during it all you have, as I would express it, learned the fourth commandment so well.

Go with God, then, to your life-work, and may the promise of the fourth commandment go with you, it shall be well with you! And be yourself a living proof of the truth that *the better Christian, the better engineer!*

Whatever else was spoken at the table — or afterwards — must be omitted here.

But if we could have accompanied the guests on the way home, we should have heard repeated again and again, in the larger and smaller groups, such exclamations as: Such a landlord and family you will have to hunt for a long time — God bless our landlord and his family and grant them a long life! — thanks and praise to God for such a blessed festival! etc.

And Baard Haugen's last words, before parting from the others, were:

I have, as you all know, been a hard case all my life — God forgive me my sin! — but of *one* thing I have become more and more convinced, and that is: If there are sincere Christians on earth, then Hans Heien was one of them, and then Landlord is one of them — and one thing more: The better Christian, the better tenant; and likewise: The better Christian, the better landlord.

And then I want to add, continued Anders Dalen: God grant that all of us who have been assembled to-night would try harder than before to be like Hans Heien and our landlord in their faith and godliness, that it may also be true of us, each in his position, that the better Christian the better man!

## VII.

### Faith and Reason.

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#### 1. Is Christianity Contrary to Reason?

An innocent child feels sure that what father has said is true, because father has said it.

Thus it is also with our first, childlike faith in God and His Word. We feel sure that what God tells us in His Word (the Bible) is true, because God has said it.

But it does not take long before the thoughtful child finds that reason encounters many difficulties in Christianity. Even at a pretty early age one may have considerable trouble with the miracles of the Bible. "How could the water become wine? How could the many thousand people satisfy their hunger with five loaves and two fishes?" Not to mention Balaam's ass, and the like.

Perhaps many of us remember a time when such questions caused us to have misgivings, if they do not do so even now. And that which helped us through was: "So the Bible says," and "with God nothing is impossible."

But the miracle of all miracles is: *The Word became flesh, God was in Christ.*

And these questions, doubts, and misgivings, which like a worm threaten to cut off the life-giving root of Christianity for so many, especially in youth, as a matter of course gather about the person of Him who is the center and essence of all Christianity, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son of God; conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; true man and at the same time true God; and the God-man suffering, dying; one for all, etc. There are probably those among us who at the thought of these things sometimes have felt something that reminds us of "fiery darts."

We still try to find rest from the anxious thoughts by resorting to that which in childhood brought confidence: The Bible says so; with God nothing is impossible; and we do well in clinging to that.

But the time does come to many of us, at least, when we, for all of that, do not feel as confident as before. Especially may it happen that this, "the Bible says so," does not help us to feel as confident as we did in our childhood when we hear about the so-called Bible criticism, hear that there are scholars who claim to have discovered that the Bible is no more reliable than are, for instance, the sagas of the Norwegian kings, in which Snorre evidently has included as trustworthy history many marvelous leg-

ends which, during the oral tradition from generation to generation, had formed around the real events.

Some of the Bible critics now claim to have discovered that the same is the case with several of the Bible stories that we think are accounts of people who really have lived and events that really have taken place.

I mention this, because I suppose that many of you have heard of it before, or that you will at all events hear or read thereof.

And then I want to say: Let us not lose our balance if we hear that some scholars claim to have found mistakes here and there in the Bible. Some of these men are very ready to say that it is the "latest results of scholarship," when they themselves have a new idea, a surmise, for which they think they have found some support in their researches. But it has been seen more than once that in a few years it has become necessary to abandon such "results" as untenable. And that will, no doubt, be the case hereafter.

And then we must remember, what applies to every one of us, that we "know in part." Therefore it is not strange that our understanding of the Bible in many respects may be defective. That the Bible is given us by God to reveal His will unto our salvation, and that any one who will do the will of God shall know, as Jesus said, whether the doctrine be of

God — and *that* the doctrine *is* of God, is an established fact and shall so remain for all time.

Is Christianity, as some say, contrary to reason? Indeed, not. When at times it looks that way to us, it is only due to our shortsightedness.

The little child that has barely learned its multiplication table does not understand father's, the scholar's way of figuring when he, for instance, computes the size of the sun, its distance from the earth, etc. But there is not therefore any conflict between his and the child's way of handling the figures. If the child says: "You are figuring wrong, father, for you are figuring otherwise than I do," he only answers: "You are too small yet to understand my figures."

So here, too: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts, saith the Lord" (Is. 55, 8. 9).

A heaven that was no higher than the earth would be no heaven. And a God whose thoughts were not higher than human thoughts would be no God.

God's plan for our salvation, God in Christ, is far above the reach of human thought and reason; faith alone can grasp it.

He who in religious matters will believe only that which he thinks he can grasp with his reason is called a rationalist; his religion, rationalism. But it is not the fault of reason when things go wrong. It is the fault of the corrupt will — as in other matters, so

here. Humanity's intellectual giants, the most gifted and enlightened, have also in great part been believing Christians.

Therefore no one ought to speak evil of reason or wish it out of the way. We could no more do without it than memory, for instance. And no one must say that his reason compels him to reject Christianity. *Ye would not*, were the words of our Savior to Jerusalem, which rejected Him. And therein is expressed the innermost, the true reason for rejecting Him, wherever and whenever it is done. *They would not*.

The faith of the child is, as before stated, to begin with, an entirely unquestioning faith. Father has said so — God has said so, that is enough; one feels confident. Some do even as adults keep this confidence and certainty apparently unmoved. Others must experience misgivings and struggles, though that, too, in varying degree, so that no one must say to his brother: If you have not had the very same misgivings and struggles that I have, there must be something wrong with your faith; or: there must be something wrong with me, because I have not had the same experiences as this or that other person.

However that may be, misgivings and doubts may come upon any one of us sooner or later. Let us not hope to escape. But the more completely we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord Jesus to live entirely with Him and for Him, the better we are

equipped for the struggles that may await us, that kind of struggle, also, which we now have in mind.

"Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world," said the believing men of Sychar to the woman of Samaria (John 4, 42). They plead what they have seen and experienced.

And if we have lived for some time as faithful disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, listened to His speech, and sincerely tried to do what He bids us, then can we also speak from experience, and our testimony will be essentially as follows:

Jesus, and He only, can heal the wounded conscience and give comfort and peace. He gives power to triumph in the hour of temptation, and power to bear the sad destinies of life, power to bear humiliations, persecutions, if so be, without becoming embittered and without despairing. He helps me to await the future hopefully in spite of dark clouds on the horizon, in hope for me and all mine, and in hope for the progress and triumph of the cause of the Kingdom of God on the whole earth. He gives me the inexpressible joy of being allowed to be His with my whole life, so that whatever tasks I may have in life derive their highest value and greatest beauty from the fact that I now can see them as tasks given me by Him, the most exalted and the best of all lords

and kings. Then is youth with its ideals ennobled. And then there falls a tinge of sublimity and beauty upon my entire life even though I may have the humblest position in the world, for I have a service within the threshold of the temple of God on earth. He takes away from me the terror of death, and He supplies my soul with the glorious and blessed hope of eternal life.

Furthermore: He gives me a disposition which was not mine before, so that now I find it more blessed in love to do good than in self-love to enjoy that which is good, more blessed in love to give and sacrifice than in self-love to receive, more blessed in love to help and serve than in self-love to be helped and served. Then the love of Jesus Christ is gaining control of my inward and outward life, His image is taking form in me—in me, who by nature was bound in self-love, saturated in self-love.

When we have such experiences—and any one who will do what *He* bids us can have them—we must say:

I believe now, not only because it says so and so in the Bible, but I have myself experienced that Jesus, as He appears in the Gospel, satisfies the deepest yearning of my soul; He is the very Savior that I need; He is indeed the Savior of the world, the Christ.

And then we can cheerfully meet all rationalistic

arguments that attack our faith, as that believing young carpenter answered the rationalistic student who had tried so hard to persuade him of the absurdity of Christianity: "You must go about it altogether differently, if you would succeed in taking the faith away from one who really has it. You would have to prove to him that he does not experience the truth of the Word of God in his life; you would have to prove to him that it is not true that he draws nearer to God the more sincerely he takes the Word of God to heart; and that it is not true, either, that he experiences more distress and misery the more disobedient he is. But that proof you will never be able to produce, because every believing Christian knows from daily experience that all his comfort and peace and strength and power comes from obeying the Word, and that his greatest grief and distress is due to the fact that he is as yet unable perfectly to obey the Word."

Do you as he did! Be not too ready to engage with those who "dote about questions and strifes of words" (1 Tim. 6, 4). The Bible and Christianity are above disputing about in that manner. And it is not by that sort of strife of words that souls are converted and saved. But abide ever more honestly with the Lord Jesus, grow ever more true to Him, receive an ever greater abundance of His spirit and grace, light, and strength! And you will, as all

honest disciples of the Lord from the time of the apostles unto this day, have just such experiences as those mentioned. And you will thereby receive all needed power to triumph over every objection that may arise against your Christian belief, from within or from without.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

## 2. "Christianity and Humanity's Great Men."

Those who want to see the assertion that Christianity is incompatible with great intelligence, learning, ability, and culture, thoroughly demolished, I would advise to read L. Dahle's book, "Christianity and Humanity's Great Men."

If I could repeat to you the contents of the whole book, I would do so. But I must confine myself to directing your attention to it, to "review" it, as we generally say.

The author shows

that "the great majority of the greatest and best poets, artists, scientists, statesmen, have been religious men, . . ."

that "the greatest have at all times submitted to God and given Him the glory, . . ."

that "the very greatest, the pioneers in the different domains, have to a great extent either openly

confessed their Christian faith or, at least, expressed a deep respect for Christianity."

Let me mention some of these "great men."

1. *Artists*: Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo (painters — the first also great as a sculptor, architect, engineer, poet), Dante, Shakespeare, Milton (poets, — the first also great as a jurist, linguist, warrior, statesman), Bach, Händel, Mendelssohn, Hayden (musicians).

2. *Scientists*: Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Isaac Newton, Linné, Örsted, Simpson, Pasteur.

3. *Statesmen*: Axel Oxenstjerna, George Washington, Gustavus Adolphus, Abraham Lincoln, William Wilberforce, Gladstone.

You will remember that all these are men who are looked up to by the whole civilized world as among the greatest, each in his domain.

And when I tell you that Dahle's book besides these presents to us a great many other acknowledged masters and most prominent representatives of the various sciences: Philosophers, linguists, historians, geographers, mathematicians, lawyers, naturalists, physicians, etc. — from past and present times, many from the 19th century — and that it is true of all of them, that they "have either openly confessed their Christian faith or, at least, expressed a deep respect for Christianity," then you will understand that we here have a very remarkable collection of pictures, a

"portrait gallery" which it will please every Christian to see.

Personally I have found great edification in studying these portraits and in listening to the quiet, strong testimony that proceeds from them.

And to you, young people, I would say: Procure the book and read it!

If any one then tries to make you believe that it is only ignorant and limited people who cling to Christianity, you will know that it is not true.

And if any one would persuade you that Christianity is a hindrance to enlightenment and progress, that you must "liberate" yourself from it in order to achieve anything really great and good, you know that the very artists, scientists, etc., who achieved most, have been believing Christians.

Then you will not be so easily tempted to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord (2 Tim. 1, 8).

Dear young people, never be ashamed of your Christian faith or your Bible!

Verily, you are in good company when you place yourselves under the banner of Christianity. For there they have stood, the greatest and the best, of all centuries!























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